



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

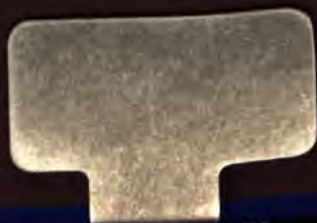
### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600065083S



## GEORGE MACDONALD, LL.D.

**ANNALS OF A QUIET**  
Neighbourhood. Crown 8vo, 6s.

**THE SEABOARD PARISH.**  
Crown 8vo, 6s.

**WILFRED CUMBERMEDE.**  
Crown 8vo, 6s.

**RANALD BANNERMAN'S**  
**BOYHOOD.** With Illustrations.  
Crown 8vo, cloth extra, 5s.

**UNSPOKEN SERMONS.**  
Crown 8vo, 3s. 6d.

**THE MIRACLES OF OUR**  
**LORD.** Crown 8vo, 6s.

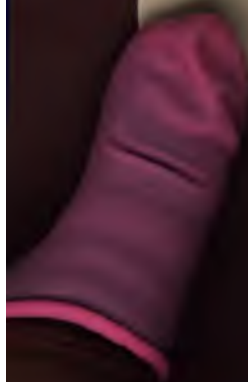
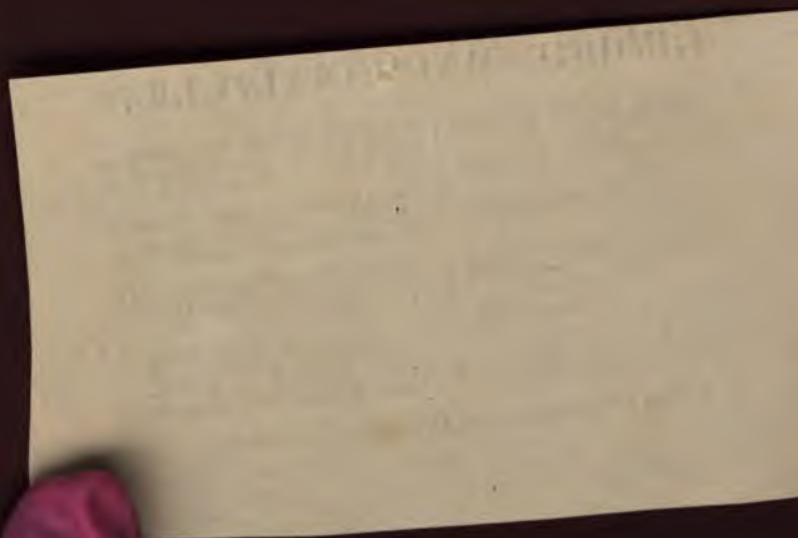
**AT THE BACK OF THE**  
**NORTH WIND.** With Illustrations.  
Crown 8vo, cloth gilt extra, 5s.

**DEALINGS WITH THE**  
**FAIRIES.** With Illustrations.  
Square 32mo, cloth gilt extra, 2s. 6d.

**THE PRINCESS AND THE**  
**GOBLIN.** With Illustrations. Crown  
8vo, cloth gilt extra, 6s.

**WORKS OF FANCY AND**  
**IMAGINATION :** being a reprint of  
Poetical and other Works. Pocket-  
volume Edition, in neat case, £2 2s.

DALDY, ISHSTER & CO., 56, LUDGATE HILL, LONDON.







# THE GOSAU SMITHY

AND OTHER STORIES.



VOL. II.





# THE GOSAU SMITHY

And other Stories.

BY MRS. PARR

AUTHOR OF "DOROTHY FOX," ETC., ETC.,

IN TWO VOLUMES.—II.



LONDON  
DALDY, ISBISTER, & CO.  
56, LUDGATE HILL  
1875

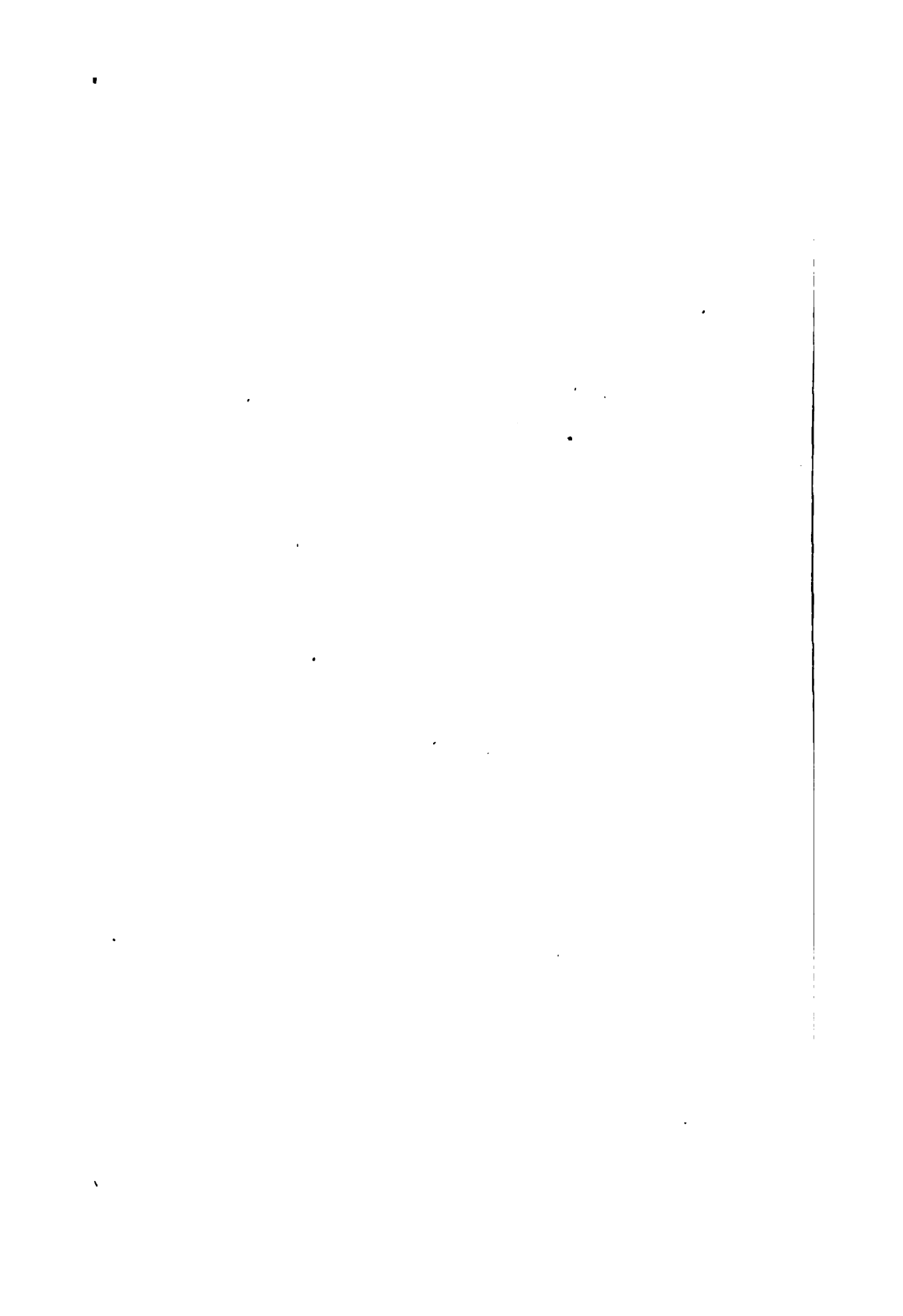
251. b. 428

**LONDON**  
**PRINTED BY VIRTUE AND CO.**  
**CITY ROAD**

## CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

---

	PAGE
SYLVIA . . . . .	1
MADELEINE TROWER'S FORTUNE . . . .	75
FAIR MARGARET . . . . .	171
SAXHAM GRANGE . . . . .	222



## SYLVIA.

---

### I.

IT was a sweet spring day, and the country round and about Pict's Hill was beginning to don its holiday dress of green. The elms were first and foremost in smartness; the ashes had nearly parted with the bunches of black seeds which had rattled vigorously through the March winds; the oaks had put out little hard rosy buds; and chestnuts, birches, limes, and beeches, each strove vigorously to attract some portion of the notice bestowed upon the flowery loveliness of the fruit trees, which were now in full blossom. How fresh and sweet everything looked; how fragrant the air smelt,

scented as it was with the apple-bloom, round which the bees kept up an unceasing murmur. The birds chirped and chattered over their nest-building, flying about, and even lingering to rest their burdens on the sills of the open windows.

Through one of these windows could be seen the figure of a man, apparently in a very restless and uneasy mood. At times he sat perfectly still; then he would frighten the swallows by suddenly jumping up, and walking backwards and forwards in the room; then he would throw himself into his chair again, and sit for a short while.

All this excitement had evident reference to two letters which he held in his hand, and which he still went on reading, although he knew their contents thoroughly. The principal one was written in a large straggling, unsteady hand, and ran as follows:—

“MY DEAR KERRISON,

“In old days you and I were great chums, and now that, through an ugly fall I’ve had, the doctor here (though, by the way, I don’t place any confidence in him) declares that another such (it was the result of a sort of giddy faintness) might end fatally, I begin to recall the past, and wish that I had my time to go over again. Of course, long before this, you have married Lizzie Green. Ah! I can picture you in the old place. I know that you are living there; for, coming across an Essex paper the other day, I saw your name mentioned at the Chelmsford dinner. Well, you deserve all your happiness; for you were the best fellow I ever met. ‘Wish I could return the compliment,’ say you: I wish you could. If I had my life to live over again, I shouldn’t be what I am. But don’t think of that; ‘I wasn’t always a boots,’ as Sam



Weller says ; there *was* some good in me once, Kerry, when you used to be so fond of me. Recall those days, bring them back to your mind, and for their sake do what I am going to ask of you. You know poor Clara left me with a child, who, when I'm gone, won't have a single friend in the world. The little her mother left her is—well, gone like the rest. It never troubled me before ; but what is to become of her ? The thought of it makes me sicken as I never did in my life. She's a good little girl, Kerry ; and, though she has not been taught much, she's picked up a deal. Your wife, who I know is a good woman, might make her useful—find something for her to do. Ask her to try, for your sake ; and I ask you, in memory of the man you once called your friend—for pity's sake, for humanity's sake—to give her shelter for a time, and keep her out of

temptation. God bless you, and reward you as you do by the girl.

“She does not know that the money her mother left her is gone. How I wish now I hadn’t had power to touch it! Tell her I lost it: don’t let her know I spent it. God bless you, Kerry. I believe, after all, this doctor is a regular Shaker. I’m only just over fifty, you know, and a little quiet will very likely set me all straight. Who knows, but I may turn over a new leaf yet, and become ‘esteemed and respected by all who knew him’? But, anyhow, I shall always be,

“Faithfully yours,

“STANHOPE DUDLEY WILTON.”

By the side of this lengthy epistle was a short note, which ran—

“DEAR MR. KERRISON,

“Poor papa was taken with another fit last Wednesday week, from which he never recovered, and died after twelve hours. A little time ago he left me directions to send this letter to you (as you would manage my affairs for me), and wait here until I got an answer; but the expenses have been heavier than he thought, and I have not much money left; and, not knowing what to do when that is gone, I think it best to leave, and come to England, without waiting. So I shall start to-morrow morning, and be at Bridgeman’s Hotel on Wednesday, where I shall wait until you come and fetch me.

Believe me, dear Mr. Kerrison,

“Very truly yours,

“SYLVIA C. WILTON.”

“It really is a most awkward position to be placed in,” said Mr. Kerrison, laying

down the letters for the twentieth time. "I have no idea what to do for the best. Why, God bless me! it must be sixteen years since I heard from Dudley Wilton. Poor fellow! poor fellow! Gone, cut off with so little warning! What a splendid fellow I thought him the first time I saw him at Drury's! He was my hero for years; and to think how low he fell. I remember Vigors telling me that, when he met him at Spa, he looked a broken-down *roué*, a regular gambler—all but a card-sharper. But, upon my word, it's too bad of him to leave his child to my care. Wife! I haven't got a wife. Very pleasant for me to go about the country telling people that she was left to me, under the idea that I had married Mrs. Carter Jones." Then he took the smaller letter up again. "I wonder how old she is? The writing might be any age. A nice life I shall have with

Matilda. I must not tell her that she is going to stay; and, indeed, the only thing I can do is to put her to school—an articulated pupil, or something of that sort. Poor child!" he said, nodding his head gravely, "you are welcome to the little help I can give you in the way of money; for it *must* be a charity to help you, whatever such a bringing up may have made you. It's having her here is the awkward part. Perhaps Matilda may suggest something. At all events, I must tell her; as I shall have to go to London at once. I cannot let the poor forlorn girl remain at an hotel by herself. Dear, dear! what a fate for a child! I suppose she's coming by the way of Dieppe. I wonder at what time the train gets in. Now I do hope Matilda will be reasonable, and see that this is none of my seeking."

## II.

THE Matilda in question was Mr. Kerrison's sister. Since the death of her husband—which had occurred some years back—she had resided at Pict's Hill, and had ruled the household with a rod of iron. She had professedly come on a visit, but, once established, it took far more than Thomas Kerrison's delicate hints and feeble remonstrances to oust her from her comfortable position; besides which, as she remarked to not a few of her more familiar acquaintances, "It was such a comfort for Thomas to have one about him who would see that everything did not go to rack and ruin, as it certainly was doing before she came to Pict's Hill; besides which, it was not common justice to her Theodore to let strangers spend what would, of course, sooner or later be his."

Poor Thomas Kerrison ! bitterly did he mourn the day which had brought Mrs. Smale to the house which was no longer his own in anything but name. He was a quiet, large-hearted, generous man, with a heap of little fidgety odd ways, not natural to him—the result rather of his having been brought up by two old uncles. In the county he was a general favourite ; and the hospitality of Pict's Hill was generally known and appreciated by people who came and went at all times. Hungry men would drop in to breakfast ; ladies would stop in their drives to luncheon ; at dinner, stragglers, who had been hunting, fishing, shooting, as the season might chance to be, would put in an appearance—some of them probably announcing an intention of stopping the night. It was Liberty Hall at Pict's Hill ; and nothing pleased its master more than to hear it so called.

In the midst of all this, down dropped Mrs. Smale, determined to put a stop to all this freedom. So whenever any of Thomas's old friends came, she fussed and bothered and apologized for everything that was put before them, saying if she had but known they were coming things should have been so different. However, the next time they must just drop a line, so that she and Thomas might expect them, and be better prepared ; and it was not long before her manoeuvre succeeded. By degrees the visits became less frequent, and had gradually dropped off, until now, save by special invitation, very few guests come to Pict's Hill, which, Mrs. Smale boastfully said to herself, had once more assumed the decency of a respectable house, instead of a barrack, which it might have been well taken for when she came there. Then to think of what Thomas was hastening to ! Why, every



farthing he possessed would have gone, instead of something being put by each year, as was the duty of a man with his comfortable income, and neither wife nor child to take from him. For Miss Lizzie Green, the lady Mr. Kerrison had chosen for his wife, had suddenly jilted him and married Mr. Carter Jones, of Gopsall Manor. Everybody declared that Miss Green had behaved shamefully—that she was a hard-hearted, mercenary flirt; but, though the blow was a heavy one to a man of his temperament, Thomas Kerrison tried to make excuses for her, saw faults in himself and good qualities in Carter Jones, and, with many a sigh over his lost love, he made up his mind that his fate was sealed, and he, like his uncles, destined to be an old bachelor.

“Now there is my Theodore,” Mrs. Smale would frequently say, “just in the position that you were, Thomas—fatherless, and left

to an uncle's care, and so like you too;" and Mr. Kerrison felt that, if there *was* a resemblance between them (and he supposed there must be, or why should his sister so insist on it), it was no wonder that he remained unmarried. There were not so very many years between the age of Mrs. Smale and her brother, but in the appearance of the two a very wide difference existed. Although forty-four, Thomas Kerrison was still a young-looking man, with but very few lines in his kindly face, and not a trace of grey visible in his brown hair; while at fifty-three Mrs. Smale's spare figure had collapsed into a peg, whereon she hung iron-grey alpacas, dingy linsey-woolseys, and all dresses which increased the severity of her appearance, and marked the forlornness of her position—a fact she further set forth by encircling her melancholy visage with a lavender-trimmed cap, and

fastening her collar with a large brooch, representing an urn beneath a weeping willow, encircled by an "In memory of," referring, of course, to the departed Smale, of whose hair this interesting token was composed.

Considering these things, perhaps most of us would have shared Mr. Kerrison's trepidation in announcing to this lady the approach of an unknown and unexpected interloper—a girl, too—perhaps a child; for though Mrs. Smale said that she was exceedingly fond of children, yet if they chanced anywhere to be present, and happened to move about, or cry, or laugh, or show signs of animation, she had a way of looking at them which effectually prevented their fond mothers from ever bringing them on a second visit to Pict's Hill.

But of what avail is this digression? Mrs. Smale has to be told this aggravating occur-

rence, and Mr. Kerrison has to tell her. His intention, on going in to luncheon, was to tell her while the meal progressed; but, his nervousness getting the upper hand of him, he deferred the communication until they had finished. Then he fidgeted about the room, taking up first one thing and then another, until the clock warned him that it wanted but a quarter to the hour at which he had ordered his dog-cart. Further delay was therefore impossible, and in his desperation he blurted out—

“Oh, by the way, Matilda, do you remember Dudley Wilton?”

“What! that scamp you used to think so much of?—who, I always said, would never——”

“Yes, yes,” interrupted her brother, “the same man; though you should not call him such a name, Matilda: the poor fellow is dead.”

"And a great mercy, I should say."

"Matilda!" and Mr. Kerrison tried to throw the most compassionate rebuke into his voice; "he died quite suddenly in a fit abroad."

"A judgment on him," snorted Mrs. Smale, not interested enough in the communication to leave off her occupation of tearing up letters into strips for paper lights.

Poor Mr. Kerrison! What with his own annoyance, her answers, her indifference, and the irritating crackle of the paper, he grew desperate; and seeing it was of no use to stand shivering on the brink, he took his "tremendous header," by saying in a quick, sharp tone, and with a face that was crimson with excitement—

"Well, he's left a daughter; and I've promised that she shall come and stay here until some decision is come to about her

affairs." Then, seizing the opportunity afforded by Mrs. Smale's breathless astonishment, he went on. "It's not what I wished for, or a thing of my seeking in any way; but since it's done, and the man's dead, and the girl's in England waiting at—at her lawyer's, we must make the best of it. And oh! here's Jim with the cart. I'm off by the three train, and I shall bring her back with me."

Mrs. Smale's strength had returned by this time.

"Thomas!" she all but screamed; "do I hear aright? Are you in your senses? That vagabond's daughter coming beneath your roof?"

"Now, my dear, pray don't be violent. You forget the windows are open, and the servants will hear you."

"Hear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Smale. "If the whole world were listening, I would

still say that never while I have breath left in my body will I give my consent to the vile, iniquitous plot to foist this creature upon you! Oh, the designing villain! He knew what a soft, easily-taken-in, poor creature he had to deal with in you."

"Matilda! I desire you say no more." Mr. Kerrison was rather nettled by that last remark; for he was a magistrate, and flattered himself upon his acuteness and severity.

"Come to stay, indeed!" Mrs. Smale went on. "Yes, highly probable that. Once let them get her foot inside this house, and you'll never get rid of her."

"Well!" retorted Mr. Kerrison, with unusual sharpness, "she won't be the first of her sex who has done that here."

Mrs. Smale saw that the time for tears had come, so feeling in her pocket for her handkerchief—which, by some mysterious

---

arrangement, always remained folded, and, save on such occasions as these, was never used—she applied its somewhat crumpled folds to her eyes, murmuring in a broken voice—

“Oh! that I should live to see the day when you can compare your own sister to the offspring of a man who was a disgrace to his friends and a shame to his country!”

Mr. Kerrison felt his only safety was in immediate flight; so telling Jim to fetch the rug, and thus getting rid of the intelligent grin of that appreciative youth, who took the opportunity of announcing in the kitchen that there was a nice kick-up going on in the direction indicated by his thumb, he said in the firmest voice he could assume—

“Now, I tell you what it is, Matilda; I don’t want to hurt your feelings in any way, and you know that as long as you like to stay in this house you are welcome; but you



*must* allow me, as its master, to exercise the right of asking whom I please to enter it, and therefore I am sure that, with your usual good sense, you will give a friendly welcome to this poor child until we can see where best to place her."

"Child! is she a *child*?" asked Mrs. Smale, completely knocked over by her brother's unusual display of temper and firmness.

"I believe she is—or, at all events, a very young girl, who will be put to school. Now, good-bye, and send Jim to meet the nine o'clock train;" and he walked out of the room, got into his dog-cart, and drove off, feeling that he was one of the pluckiest men in England.

"I never expected to settle the matter so easily," he thought; "but Matilda brought it entirely upon herself. That I am not to be heard in my own house is rather too

much ; and, though I intend that this child, or girl, or whatever she is, shall go off to some respectable establishment as soon as possible, still I feel the time is come when I must make a stand, and I don't fancy my good sister will say much about her soft, easily-deceived brother in future." He quite chuckled to himself now, so pleased was he with the victory he had gained.

### III.

THE train was not quite punctual in starting. There were one or two delays on the journey, and a block in Fenchurch Street, which altogether made it past six o'clock before Mr. Kerrison arrived at Bridgeman's Hotel. On inquiring if the continental train was in, he was told that it would not be in for another half-hour yet.

“Expecting to meet any one here, sir?” asked the porter.

“Yes,” answered Mr. Kerrison; and he stood reflecting whether he had not best remain. It was so awkward, neither of them knowing one another. “I expect a young lady who is——”

“Not of the name o’ Kerrison, sir?” interrupted the man.

“Yes, I am Mr. Kerrison.”

“Lady’s here, sir—come by boat—got in about three. Here, Jane,” he called out, “gentleman for number seven;” and in a few minutes Jane had conducted Mr. Kerrison up-stairs, and opening the door of a small room, announced “the gentleman,” and disappeared.

There were no lights, and it was too dark to see anything clearly; but somebody jumped up from the sofa, and exclaimed joyfully—

---

“Is it Mr. Kerrison? I am so glad! I began to fear”—with a quiver in the voice—“that something had happened to my letter.”

Feeling two cold little hands put into his, and seeing the dim outline of a young woman before him, what could kind-hearted Thomas Kerrison do but shake the hands, as if in welcome, and say how sorry he was that he had not been there earlier to receive her.

“Oh, now it does not matter in the least; only I began to feel dreadfully dismal, and I wondered, if you did not come, what I should do. Of course, I knew it must be something wrong with the letter, because poor papa said I might always depend upon you.” Then a pause ensuing, she said, “Shall I ring for candles? I am longing to see your face, Mr. Kerrison.”

She rang the bell, and Mr. Kerrison be-

gan to ask questions about her crossing, learned that she had come by steamer from Boulogne, and that she was not a particularly good sailor.

"Bring some candles, please," she said to the waiter, as he appeared.

"Yes, miss," and, with an eye to business, he added, "Will you take anything to eat with 'em?"

"I should like a cup of tea, if it is not keeping you too long, Mr. Kerrison."

"Me? Oh, dear, no! But would not dinner be better? or have you had dinner?"

"No, I have had nothing since the morning. I did not think I could eat anything," she added apologetically. "But your arrival has quite revived me."

"Nothing since twelve! Bless me! you must be in a fainting condition. What can we have, waiter?"

---

“Anything you like, sir.”

“What would you like?” Mr. Kerrison asked.

“Some cold meat, I think,” said Sylvia.

“Well, miss, I don’t know as how we have much as is tempting in the cold line; for there’s bin a terrible cut on the joints all day long.”

“Any hot meat?”

“Not ready, sir.”

“Dear, dear!” said Mr. Kerrison; “you really have nothing.”

“Oh, beg pardon, sir; there’s chops, sir, and a steak, sir. Wouldn’t the lady like a bit of steak? or ’am, sir? or”—and here his voice grew quite confidential—“what’s there agin fried ’am and eggs, miss? Parties as come by the boat often prefers that above everythink we can offer.”

“I should like ham and eggs very

much," said Sylvia, wishing to put an end to the matter.

"Very well," said Mr. Kerrison, relieved to have it decided. "Then bring as soon as possible some tea and some ham and eggs."

"For two, sir?"

"Certainly, for two; and the candles at once."

"I hope it is not keeping you, Mr. Kerrison," she said, when the door had closed.

"Not at all. We cannot catch any train before nine, and by that time you will have fortified yourself for the journey."

"Is it a long one?"

"Oh, dear, no! About twenty miles to Gopsall—that's our station; and then we have a drive of half an hour to Pict's Hill—that's my house."

At this point the candles came in; but it was not until the waiter had withdrawn

that either of the two raised their eyes for a survey, and then Mr. Kerrison saw before him a pretty, fair-haired girl, who looked about nineteen. She was very pale, and the circles round her eyes told of weariness and anxiety. She coloured a little as their eyes met, and said with a somewhat nervous smile—

“We are obliged to survey each other, are we not? I dare say I look not over brilliant—very untidy. I have had so much to think about lately; and then poor papa!” And her voice trembled and her eyes filled with tears, although she made an effort to keep them back.

“Poor fellow!” said Mr. Kerrison, more in pity for the grieved face before him than in memory of his lost friend.

“I can never thank you enough, Mr. Kerrison, for letting me come to you.” She had evidently been told that she was to



go to his house. "I know poor papa had his faults; but he was very fond of you, and he was all I had." And here she broke down so completely, that soft-hearted Thomas Kerrison felt he had been a brute to have wished for a single moment that this poor girl should have been left utterly friendless and desolate.

The rattle of the cups and saucers made Sylvia hastily dry her eyes, and pretend to be looking into her bag; and before she came back to the table to pour out the tea she had quite recovered her composure; and Mr. Kerrison had determined to exert himself to be cheerful, so that she might not be led to think more on any painful subject. Seeing her looking furtively at him, he said laughingly, "Well, am I what you expected to see?"

"No, not in the least. I don't know why, but I fancied, from your having been

---

at school with papa, that you were nearly as old as he was. You must have been a little boy when he was a grown-up man."

"Not exactly," said Mr. Kerrison, not at all displeased with the compliment; "but of course there *was* some years' difference between us."

"And Mrs. Kerrison, is she young too?"

The colour *would* mount into Thomas Kerrison's face, and it was made no better by his trying to gulp down hot tea before he answered.

"Your father made a mistake. I am not married."

"Not married! Why, papa thought——"

"Yes, yes; I know he thought so. But you know the old adage, 'Many a slip 'twixt cup and lip.' No; my sister lives with me—Mrs. Smale; she's a widow."

"That's very nice," said Sylvia, not quite knowing how best to ignore Mr. Ker-

rison's visible confusion. "I hope we shall be great friends," she added, after an attentive survey of her plate.

"I am sure we shall."

"Oh, I did not mean you and me. I felt certain of that directly I saw you. I seem to have known you ever so long, and to be quite at home with you. You are my—my guardian, are you not?"

"Yes," said honest Thomas.

"Mr. Kerrison, I can't thank you. The words choke me. I can only say that if it was not for you, and feeling I have one friend, I—I think my heart would break."

"Then I am very glad that your father left you to my care," and this time his answer was quite true. "Perhaps," thought he, "I had best say something of Matilda;" so he said, "My sister is a very estimable woman, but she has had a great deal of trouble, so you must not mind if she is a

---

little frigid and distant. She will not mean to be so; but it is her manner, and it may strike a stranger as peculiar. But we have all our little peculiarities, you know."

"Of course; but thank you for telling me. Is it time we went?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Kerrison.

#### IV.

VERY soon the bill had been paid, the station reached, and the journey to Gopsall commenced. They had the carriage to themselves, and so were able to talk unrestrainedly about Mr. Wilton's illness—how he had left Paris, where for some time they had been living, with the intention of getting to England; how he was taken ill, and obliged to stop at Amiens, where he died.

"You must, please, call me Sylvia," she said.

“Must I?” laughed Mr. Kerrison.  
“And what must you call me?”

“I don’t know. What would you like me to call you?” she asked, rather shyly.

“Well, my friends call me Tom; my sister calls me Thomas.”

“Oh, Tom seems so dreadfully familiar all at once, and I don’t care for Thomas. Neither seems your proper name to me. Papa always called you Kerry.”

“Then you call me Kerry.”

“May I? I think it’s a very pretty name.”

“Then Kerry it shall be.”

“Very well,” she said laughing; and then, as the train gave a jerk and a stop, and Mr. Kerrison began picking up her cloak and bag, she asked, “Have we arrived? Is this Gopsall?”

But already his head was out of the window, and he was shouting, “Curtis! por-

ter! Here, one of you, just call out if there's any one from my place;" and, amid the noise and confusion which the twenty people or so at a country station usually contrive to create, Sylvia was landed on the platform, hustled through the wicket, and helped into the dog-cart. Her box was delivered over to Jim, and off they drove.

Tired as the poor girl was, there seemed something delightfully invigorating in the brisk drive and fresh air. Vainly she peered into the darkness; nothing could she see. Even in Gopsall street-lamps are unknown, and except the lamps of a few vehicles, with whose occupants a cheery "good night" was exchanged, nothing was to be seen.

At length they turned into a narrow lane. Jim jumped down, opened a gate, and ran on in front, while the high cart bumped along a rather uneasy path, which ter-

minated in another gate, held open by Jim, and the lights of the house were before them.

“Remember what I told you,” said Mr. Kerrison in an anxious whisper, as he helped Sylvia down. “My sister is very peculiar.”

And certainly Sylvia thought his words were but just; for Mrs. Smale, deciding upon showing her righteous indignation at her worst fears being confirmed, preserved a strict silence, and Sylvia began at last to suspect that this peculiarity meant something more than an oddness of behaviour. She feared the poor thing was a little queer, and under this amiable delusion she was quite cheerful, and contentedly went to take possession of the small room Mrs. Smale had thought fit to have prepared for her.

Ah, Sylvia ! you never knew what a battle

Thomas Kerrison fought for you that night—what evasions, what prevarications he went through—the stories he invented, and the falsehoods he told on your behalf. If it be true that the end may justify the means, surely these things are not laid to his account. However, Mrs. Smale had to give way, and make a promise that she would treat Miss Wilton with consideration, and refrain from speaking to any one about the faults of her unfortunate father, who, by Mr. Kerrison's account, had left his affairs in rather a complicated state. Until matters were looked into, the lawyer could not say whether or not Miss Wilton would have more than her mother's small fortune to live upon.

Mrs. Smale gave the promise, though under a very decided protest, leaving it to her own skill to speedily dislodge the new claimant for favour; but Miss Sylvia



Wilton and Mr. Thomas Kerrison were of two distinct natures and dispositions, and the one was much more difficult to manage than the other, and the other was much more unruly now there was some one—not himself—to stand up for and defend.

## V.

Six months passed, twelve months passed, and Sylvia was still at Pict's Hill, and seemingly as little likely to leave as on the first day of her arrival. Long before this she had sounded the depths of Mrs. Smale's character; and now, when the periodical time for a tussle arrived, Sylvia rather enjoyed the fight, and the usual triumph of having got the best of her enemy. Had the girl entertained the faintest notion that she was living at Pict's Hill dependent on charity, every taunt would have told,

every stab gone home. But feeling certain, from what her father had said, and from all that Thomas Kerrison had told her, that the income from her mother's property was quite sufficient to make her independent—and that, until matters were fully settled, she had to apply to him—she was perfectly satisfied ; and, knowing that she was daily growing more useful and necessary to her guardian, she did not care a button for aught that Mrs. Smale might say. I even fear that, in the secrecy of her own chamber, she distinctly called that respectable matron “a spiteful-old cat ;” but this must be excused under the plea of her bad training, which had been a sorry one indeed. Good, worthy Thomas Kerrison could never have dreamed what it was to this poor, neglected, tossed-about girl, to find herself surrounded by the quiet peace and repose of Pict's Hill. True, Mrs. Smale might point

her venomous tongue with spite and envy, now and again; but what was that to one who had been left to bear the brunt of outraged landladies, furious to find that they had been taken in by a penniless adventurer, from whose forlorn child they could get no better redress than bitter tears of shame and sorrow. The old-fashioned house, the ample table, the dainty freshness and spotlessness of every surrounding—why, it was a very paradise to Sylvia, whose poor heart seemed to overflow with the new-found happiness that had come upon her. Go away from Pict's Hill!

“Why,” she said one day, when walking with Mr. Kerrison, “I don't believe I could; unless you send me away, Kerry, you will never get rid of me.” And though Kerry never answered her, but walked on in silence, Sylvia was not troubled—she felt certain she should never

---

be forced to leave the spot she now called her home.

To Thomas Kerrison's great satisfaction, all the neighbours had taken most cordially to Sylvia. No wonder! Though Sylvia had not been taught much, as her father said, still French was as familiar to her as English; and, though she was no musician, she knew enough to accompany herself on the piano, which Mr. Kerrison had hired from Chelmsford for her use. Then she was a pretty girl, able to make the most of her attractions; so that, by degrees, people began to call again at Pict's Hill. The ladies, taking their cue from Sylvia, only laughed at Mrs. Smale, and called her spiteful and fidgety, and devoutly wished that she would go back to wherever she came from.

"Oh! but what would become of me then?" Sylvia would say. "I could not stop here alone, I suppose."

"Oh, yes, you could!" said one of the girls. "You marry Mr. Kerrison!"

"Oh, that would be jolly!" exclaimed the others.

"Yes, Sylvia, that is what you are to do."

Sylvia laughed, asking them what Kerry would say to that.

"Say? why say yes, as he always does to everything you wish."

Sylvia shook her head, and turned the conversation upon something else; but when she was alone the words came back to her, and she lay awake half the night, thinking; and she concluded her reverie by saying to herself, "If it would only enter into Kerry's head! I don't see why he should not think about it."

Now it so happened that the very next day to this Mrs. Smale received a letter, the contents of which gave her great plea-

---

---

sure. It was from her son, and was to say that he had been given a holiday, which, if agreeable to his uncle and herself, he intended spending at Pict's Hill.

Mrs. Smale waited until Sylvia had left the breakfast-table, then she said in a lugubrious voice: "My letter is from Theodore, Thomas."

"Yes," said Mr. Kerrison; "and what has Theodore to say?"

"Well, I hardly know whether to make his letter known to you or not;" and she sighed with well-feigned perplexity. "It may not be agreeable, Thomas."

"Well, my dear, until you tell me what it is I can hardly venture to give an opinion, you see."

"He speaks of coming to see me, Thomas. It has come to his turn to have a holiday; and," she added timidly, "the dear boy's first thoughts turn to

what he has always been taught to consider his home."

"And why on earth shouldn't he come here! Surely there is no necessity for me to tell you or him that he is welcome."

"No, Thomas," said Mrs. Smale with hesitation. "No, I believe that; yes, I believe that you would be sorry to close your door against your own flesh and blood."

"Stuff and nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Kerrison. "What you're hinting at, or what you're driving at, I don't know; I shall be as glad to see Theodore as I ever was, and for as long as he likes to stay. When do you expect him?"

"Well, Thomas, to be candid with you, that depends."

"On what?" asked her brother, finding she made a pause.

Mrs. Smale sighed, putting her hand

into her pocket, to be ready at the right moment with her handkerchief.

“It is a painful thing when two, situated as we are, differ on any subject, Thomas, for—

‘Oh how sweet it is to see  
Brethren dwell in harmony,’

as you and I dwelt once,” and out came the handkerchief. “But on that I will not touch. This, however, I must say, that, being a mother, I have a mother’s feelings and anxieties.”

Mr. Kerrison, to intimate his complete perplexity, gave a shake of the head.

“Well, if I must speak plainly, Thomas, I do not consider it proper to throw two young people like Miss Wilton and my Theodore together. Of the former I say nothing, I leave time to disclose facts on which I am compelled to be silent; but, respecting Theodore, you must remember that he is



very likely to engross the affections of a young person who has not been used to the society of gentlemen, and who—you must excuse me saying it—would probably have no objection to become your niece.”

Thomas Kerrison was compelled to swallow his wrathful answer, and turn his face downward, fearing that if he looked at his sister she might discover how scarlet his face had suddenly become.

“Surely,” she continued, “Miss Wilton has some other friends who would be as glad to see her as she is apparently to stay with us.”

Mr. Kerrison made no answer; and, encouraged by his silence, Mrs. Smale proceeded—

“If my Theodore were led into any entanglement with a young person whose principles and ideas are as unsound and flighty as those of one who shall be name-

•

---

less, it would break my heart, Thomas. Theodore has plenty of sense, I am thankful to say, but he is not a match for cunning or deceit."

"I dare say, Matilda, you mean a great deal by what you are saying; but as these hints and allusions are quite lost upon me, perhaps you will say in a few plain words what you want me to do;" and Mr. Kerrison, feeling that he could now meet his sister's gaze, looked straight at her.

"I wish," said Mrs. Smale, "that before my son enters this house, Miss Wilton should leave it."

"Oh! then, my dear, your son may stay away; for, unless he chooses, or you choose, that he should behave with politeness to my guests, don't let him think of coming to Piet's Hill; and as to Miss Wilton, Matilda, you may as well understand once

more, that I wish her to remain as long as she feels inclined."

Mrs. Smale turned yellow with rage.

"Really," she said, "if I didn't know that you were old enough to be her father, and that you can't be blind to the way she's trying to catch young Carr, now that Edward Martin is engaged, I should think you had a motive of your own in wishing her to stay. However, one roof cannot cover us much longer; for your sake I have endured what I have, Thomas, but the trodden worm will turn." And, with the hope that her well-aimed arrow would rankle, she walked out of the room, leaving Thomas Kerrison to sit pondering over her words.

The idea of Sylvia away from Piet's Hill—out in the world, and parted from him—swept like a cloud over his heart. How different his life seemed now—all its

old happiness back, infused with a brightness quite new to him. The time never seemed to hang heavily ; there was always something to do, and somebody to do it with. Sylvia delighted in the farm, and generally after breakfast the two might be seen trotting along together, Thomas stopping every now and again to hold grave conferences with his men about the beans, the hay, the yellowing of the corn, or which of the live stock was to be sold, and what replaced ; while Sylvia ran here and there, in and out, off and back, twenty times in opposite directions. Then, in consequence of the frequent invitations to croquet and archery parties, Sylvia must be made proficient in these games, of which before she came to Pict's Hill she knew nothing. So whole mornings were spent in the croquet ground ; a target was set up in an adjoining field, and, as Mrs. Smale groaned, Thomas thought

of nothing now but of wasting his precious time with that artful, designing girl, who, knowing when she was well off, had evidently no idea of turning her back on Pict's Hill. Then Mrs. Smale would fall to wondering how much Sylvia was really possessed of, for all in vain had been her questionings of Thomas on that head. She could draw nothing from him but, from Mr. Wilton's affairs not being yet settled, that it was impossible to say with any certainty how much his daughter would have. This much only he knew, that she was safe to be independent, and not obliged to earn her own living, as Mrs. Smale had hopefully suggested.

It was a very similar answer to the one he had given to Sylvia herself, only that Mrs. Smale doubted the exact truth of the statement, and Sylvia believed it thoroughly. Never had Thomas Kerrison known the pleasure of spending money so entirely as

when Sylvia, putting her arm through his, and clasping her hands together, would say, with great gravity—

“Kerry, do you think that we can afford a new dress?”

“Twenty, my dear, if you need them.”

“Oh, you horridly extravagant old thing, as if I *could* want twenty! But I do want one for the Joliffes—a nice one too. I should think it would cost three pounds. That is not too much, is it?” and she would look up anxiously into his face, while Thomas Kerrison, trying to hide a feeling that was growing daily stronger under a great show of seriousness, would answer—

“I think we might manage that comfortably.”

“Then, shall we go into Gopsall to-day and buy it?”

“Yes.”

And Sylvia would press his arm tighter,

saying, "What a dear good Kerry you are! You make me happier every day," and Thomas would feel inclined to sigh, only that Sylvia would have asked him why he sighed, and the reason he must not let her even guess at.

## V.

A FEW mornings after Mrs. Smale's talk with her brother, as they all three sat at breakfast, she said—

"Thomas, Theodore has written, saying he will be here to-day."

"All right," answered Thomas, with his mouth full of toast, "very glad to see him."

"Theodore!" exclaimed Sylvia; "that's your son, is it not, Mrs. Smale?"

"Yes."

"How glad you must be!"

"I *am* glad that I shall see my son, but

---

I am not glad that he is coming here ;” and Mrs. Smale eyed Sylvia severely.

“No ! and why ?”

“I have my reasons,” replied the good lady significantly.

“What time is he coming ?” put in Mr. Kerrison, anxious to avoid drawing forth Mrs. Smale’s reasons for Sylvia’s edification.

“At four o’clock.”

“Perhaps you would like to meet him, Matilda. I cannot go, as I have an appointment with Joliffe at one. I shall go there before luncheon most likely.”

“And what are you going to do, Miss Wilton ?” asked Mrs. Smale.

“Going with him,” said Sylvia, nodding her head in Mr. Kerrison’s direction. “That is,” and she gave a confident smile, “if he’ll take me.”

“Persons can scarcely avoid a companionship that is pressed upon them. When I



was a young lady it was thought somewhat bold to invite yourself where a gentleman was concerned."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Mr. Kerrison; "Sylvia knows I am always glad to have her company, and Mrs. Joliffe is always delighted to get a chance of seeing her."

"Oh! I am saying nothing against her going with *you*; my hint," added Mrs. Smale, maliciously, "was rather that it would not do to treat a young gentleman in that way. Of course, persons of our age can make allowances; and, as every one says, Miss Wilton evidently looks upon you as a father."

"Miss Wilton does nothing of the kind," replied Sylvia sharply, "and, begging your pardon, neither does everybody say so. I go with him" (she always avoided saying Kerry to Mrs. Smale) "because I like being with him better than—yes, better than any-

thing else;" and she got up, and, executing a little grimacing curtsy behind Mrs. Smale's back, invited Kerry to have a turn round the garden before they went to the farm.

"I wonder," she thought, as she slowly walked down the path, waiting for Mr. Kerrison to join her, "what her son is like. If he is like her, I shall hate him. I don't believe she *is* Kerry's sister! To say that everybody thinks I treat him like a father, abominable old story-teller! I know what she is afraid of; she thinks that he would like to marry me; and so I believe he would, and so I intend he shall, for I love him with all my—— Oh, Kerry! is that you? how you made me jump!" and Sylvia stood looking as guilty as if she had been making her confessions aloud. Her rosy blushes made her look so young that poor Thomas Kerrison groaned in his heart.

“What a fool I am ! I *must* look old enough to be her father.”

## VI.

THE afternoon sun was pouring down on Gopsall Station, and on Mrs. Smale, as she sat bolt upright in the little basket carriage, trying by sundry jerks and pulls to keep Sally the mare from showing her indignation at the flies, which were striving to get through the netting which she was protected with. Suddenly Mrs. Smale's face brightened, the sound of the whistle was heard, the porter came bustling along from some secret lurking place, the clerk rushed out and locked the office-door, Sally pricked up her ears, the old white horse in the fly from the Dragon lifted up a voice of joy or woe, all to betoken that the train was near. In a moment more it had

---

reached its destination, and given up its passengers, to one of whom Mrs. Smale joyfully called out "Theodore!"

Her son had arrived, and into his ear, while Sally lazily jogged them along the road, and Jim (finding it impossible to catch a word) nodded drowsily behind, Mrs. Smale poured forth her long list of grievances and vexations. She could not help feeling a maternal pride, though it was greatly mixed with fear, in contemplating the florid good looks of her son; and never doubting the attraction he would present to the designing Sylvia, she warned him to be very careful as to what he had to say to a girl whose whole mind she could see was bent upon making a good marriage.

"Why, I believe she'd marry your uncle if she couldn't get any-one else; it really makes me at times feel quite uneasy—men are such fools."

“Are they?” said Theodore, with a knowing laugh. “Well, it won’t be much use her trying her little games with me. I’m up to most of them. You should see the girls at Jenkinson’s, they’re ready to jump down my throat. I often wish they’d give the other fellows a chance.”

“Jenkinson’s” was a refined home offered by a lady of position to a select few solicitous of being admitted into a family circle, which a desire for companionship had induced the advertiser to increase: Of this refined home and family circle Theodore was the bright particular star—the tempting bait which Mrs. Jenkinson invariably held out to the weary mothers who travelled about with unrealisable family stock. She spoke of him as a young man of excellent means, and heir to an estate and fortune. To the bachelors he was described as possessing the Pauline quality of being “all

---

things to all men," and was, as it best suited, either a young man of talent and conversation, or the most amusing entertaining fellow in the world. Therefore it was no wonder that Theodore felt perfect confidence in himself, and equal, as he said, to whatever might turn up.

Of course it would never do that so accomplished an actor, mimic, and comic singer—a man who could entertain a whole room-full of people—should not be recognised in some way from those common beings who avoid attracting notice in any way. Theodore felt he had a character to sustain, and, to the best of his ability, he contrived that his appearance and manner should announce the fact that in him you beheld no ordinary person.

Now Sylvia, during her short life, had come across many thorough-paced rogues and vagabonds; but of the "snob"—

the would-be London fast man—she knew nothing ; so that it was not in the least surprising that she should be very silent during dinner and the whole of the evening after, and that Theodore should find her eyes following him about in wondering amazement, or, as he read it, admiration.

“What can Kerry think of him?” thought she ; and, casting a furtive glance in his direction, she saw him sitting with a face of blank weariness. Not that he was more disgusted than usual with his nephew’s rattle, stories, and jokes ; for Thomas Kerrison was quite tired of being ashamed of the irrepressible Theodore, and regarded him as one of those ills which, because they cannot be remedied, must be endured. Then, in the midst of some specimen of pantomimic buffoonery to which he was treating their untutored minds, Sylvia looked towards his

---

mother; and, seeing the mixed expression of contentment, admiration, and pride displayed in Mrs. Smale's maternal gaze, she could not forbear laughing aloud; which Theodore considered a tribute to his funniness, and Kerry put down to the fact that the boy was making a bigger fool of himself than usual.

"Will he stay here long?" asked Sylvia of Mr. Kerrison, some ten days after his lively relative's arrival.

Thomas shook his head in dismal hopelessness that any relief was to be expected for many weeks from the incubus of Theodore's presence.

"It's getting perfectly unbearable," said Sylvia. "We seem always playing at 'hare and hounds.' You run away, I run after you, he runs after me, and his mother runs after him. Why this is the first time I have got a chance of speaking to you for days."



“Poor Theodore!” laughed Mr. Kerrison. “You must not be too hard upon him; he has evidently lost his heart.”

“Ah! Mrs. Smale gave me a hint yesterday about my own condition. She told me that Theodore was accustomed to live in society, and naturally he was made a great deal of; so she hoped I should not think anything of little attentions he might pay me, as it was only Theodore’s way.”

“His way, indeed!” said Mr. Kerrison. “Poor, dear Matilda! I do wish she could see her son with the eyes of other people.”

“Kerry!”

“Yes!”

“Would you like me to be your niece, and call you uncle?”

“Well, no; I trust whenever I have to part with you that it will be to a man more suited to you than Theodore is,” and Mr. Kerrison looked suddenly grave.

---

"Then you think there is a chance of my getting married some day?" said Sylvia with feigned anxiety.

"Yes, every chance."

"And," she went on, her anxiety becoming real, "you are sure that I shall be quite independent—have enough to keep me? I mean that no one would think I wanted to marry for a home, or that sort of thing? When I marry, I need marry for nothing but love, eh?"

"I hope that is the only thing you will ever marry for," and poor Kerry's heart felt very heavy; "and as for being obliged by circumstances to do so, Sylvia, you are, and always will be, perfectly independent of every one."

Sylvia's whole face brightened, and, notwithstanding she saw Theodore approaching, she gave a little skip of joy, exclaiming—

"Now I don't care for Mrs. Smale or anybody."

"Can she be thinking of any one in particular?" thought Mr. Kerrison; and the weight at his heart grew heavier than before.

### VIII.

"TIME works wonders," says the old proverb, and certainly Time, in the shape of six weeks, wrought a very considerable change in the feelings and ideas of some of the occupants of Pict's Hill. Mrs. Smale called Sylvia, dear; and said to Thomas, when speaking about her, that allowances must be made for young people. The keynote to this alteration was Theodore, who in a very short space of time contrived to imagine himself distractedly in love, and persecuted Sylvia with attentions, until even,

---

with all her resources, she was nearly beside herself, and only too delighted to accept Mrs. Joliffe's suggestion that she should spend a few days with her, which few days lengthened into a fortnight, and then she only returned because Mrs. Smale (driven to it by Theodore's ill-temper, dejection, and threats of leaving Pict's Hill) wrote and begged her to do so. That letter, Sylvia said, was worth all she should have to undergo for the remainder of Theodore's stay. Of course, at first, when Mrs. Smale began to suspect her son's attentions, she was furious; but ere long she was obliged to give way, and to allow Theodore to try and convince her that the very best thing for him to do was to marry Sylvia, and thus doubly secure Uncle Thomas's fortune and good-will.

By degrees, therefore, Mrs. Smale became an unwilling convert, and, in due time, gave

her son a promise that she would throw out a few hints to Mr. Kerrison, and sound him on the matter, although she felt quite sure she should not meet with any opposition from him ; she only hoped such a thing had been likely, for she loved Sylvia none the better for stealing her boy's heart from her. Mr. Kerrison, in reply to her remarks, only asked her what her own feelings were.

Oh ! she had nothing to say against it. Miss Wilton's antecedents were not what she should have sought for ; but if Theodore could overlook them, and Thomas forget them, it was not for her to rake up by-gones.

“ And Sylvia, what does she say ? ”

“ Now, Thomas, is it likely that Theodore would speak to her until he was quite sure, through me, that you would raise no objection.”

“ *I?* None in the least ; but I do not

feel at all sure how she will take it. What do you think?"

"What do I think?" repeated Mrs. Smale, indignation swelling her maternal bosom at the bare thought of any one, and least of all such an one as Sylvia, refusing her Theodore. "I think that she will consider herself—as I do, and every one else must—a very lucky girl."

"Ah!" said Thomas dubiously.

"I'm sure she has done all in her power to catch him."

"Has she? I have seen nothing of it."

"You know very little about such matters, my dear," said Mrs. Smale decisively. "Of course she would not go running and flying about after Theodore, as she does after you; such conduct would seem rather forward towards a young man; and as for those airs and little pettish ways she shows to him, they are only meant to lead

him on. Girls are all alike there ; in my day the flirts used to go on just like she does."

"I certainly wonder at your giving such ready sanction, Matilda ; I fancied that you had quite a dislike to Sylvia."

"People who are just and candid seldom give satisfaction," said Mrs. Smale ; "and perhaps I do speak my mind very freely, especially where I consider it my duty, as it must be the duty of every mother to speak to a young girl entering upon life, with no one to guide her. But what I have said is all for her good, and I hope she has had the sense to see it in that light."

Mr. Kerrison said no more, and the subject was not mentioned again until the day after Theodore had taken his departure, which he did with evident reluctance, and a great assumption of broken-hearted depression, occasioned by Sylvia's refusal to listen to his ardent suit. But Theodore was not

easily cast down, and it would have taken far more than an ordinary amount of discouragement to persuade him that any girl in her senses meant to say a final "no" to him. He therefore only informed his mother that Miss Wilton had not said *yes*, and 'twas his belief that she fancied his uncle would not like the match. "So you get him to speak to her," he said, "and when she's had time to miss me I shall write to her."

The morning after her son's departure Mrs. Smale entrusted her brother with this delicate commission, and Thomas promised that the next day, during a walk across the fields to Gopsall, he would speak to Sylvia seriously on the subject.

He gave this promise very readily, being perfectly convinced that Sylvia had no more thought of marrying Theodore than she had of marrying Jim the groom.



The tumult of fear and hope he lived in was growing stronger and more difficult to combat with each day; for, though he told himself that it was madness to cherish such delusions, he could not help dwelling on Sylvia's manner and looks, and wondering whether her pretty, loving ways were only prompted by gratitude. Twenty times he had made up his mind to try and bring himself to speak openly to her, but whenever an opportunity offered his courage failed, and he put off hearing his fate decided until the next time. They kept very early hours at Pict's Hill, so that breakfast was over, the farm gone through, and Mr. Kerrison and Sylvia half across the first field when eleven o'clock struck.

Sylvia was unusually silent and subdued, and Mr. Kerrison had never before found it so difficult to maintain anything like a conversation. Every time he tried to broach

the subject which he was determined this time should form the prelude to speaking about himself, his heart thumped so violently that he fancied Sylvia must hear it. At length, just as they had passed through the little turnstile, it occurred to him that he could speak better standing still, or sitting, than walking.

"Sylvia," he said, "sit down here for a few minutes;" and he pointed to the bank, shaded and screened by an old elm-tree growing in the hedge; then, leaning on the cross-wood of the stile, he stood before her, able to gaze into and read her face.

"Is anything the matter, Kerry?"

"No," he replied, and he tried to steady his voice; "only I promised my sister that I would speak to you. She tells me that you have said 'no' to Theodore."

"Well, is she not satisfied?"

"Not at all. She begged me to talk to

you about him. Theodore insists on fancying that you will not accept him because you fear it would displease me."

"I never said a word of the kind; but—*would* it please you that I should marry?" and Sylvia plucked at the grass and leaves within her reach.

"I know the thing is absurd. I am perfectly sure you have never given a thought or an encouragement of any kind to Theodore."

"That is quite true; but you have not answered my question, Kerry."

"Because—because I cannot, Sylvia. I know you will think me mad; I know how foolish I am not to let things be as they are; but the misery I have borne for the last four or five months has become unendurable."

"Why?" she said. "What is the trouble you have to bear?"

"Ah, yes!" he said bitterly, as if speaking to himself; "she does not even catch a glimpse of my meaning. I knew that she was blind to what I felt."

"Love is blind, Kerry;" and Sylvia's eyes danced with joy that at last he was going to speak.

"Sylvia!" he cried; and poor Kerry looked at her with such mournful reproach that she sprang to her feet, and putting her hands on his, she said—

"Kerry, tell me what you have in your heart. Don't hide anything from me. Speak openly to me. Would it pain you to see me marry any one?"

"Pain me!" he groaned, turning his face aside to hide its misery. "It seems like wrenching my heart out. Ah, Sylvia! you will never know how I——"

"What, Kerry? Don't stop."

“Love you.”

\* \* \* \* \*

There was nobody within sight or hearing, which was very fortunate, Sylvia thought, as, some few minutes after, regaining her sober senses, she managed to raise her head and take a rapid survey of their surroundings. As for Thomas Kerrison, at that moment he would not have cared if the whole world had been staring at his new-found delight; for, in that short oblivion, Sylvia had found means to tell him that her heart was his, and had been his for a year past.

“Only,” she said, “I did want you to say you loved me first. If you had not, I had resolved upon telling you, Kerry. I made up my mind to that the day you told me that I was quite independent.”

“Why, what had that to do with it, dear one?”

---

“ Oh ! a great deal that I need not explain now. If I had been left dependent and penniless, even upon you, Kerry, I could never have shown my love as openly as I have done ; although of course I should have felt exactly the same. Now tell me again how much you love me,” she said ; “ for I have been waiting so long for you to say it, that now I shall never be tired of hearing it over and over again.”

Somehow, they never reached Gopsall that day. Instead of going there, Sylvia went to see her friend, Mrs. Joliffe, and Kerry returned home, with some story of having been detained at the farm, and not getting an opportunity of speaking to Sylvia.

Good-natured Mrs. Joliffe was delighted with the news which Sylvia confided to her. She helped them through their dilemmas and smoothed their difficulties by asking

Sylvia to stay with her, and be quietly married from her house.

There is no need to tell of Mrs. Smale's anger nor of Theodore's wounded pride. Henceforth they could personally console each other, as, long before the wedding, Mrs. Smale took her departure from Piet's Hill and joined her son.

Sylvia never knew the kindly deception which Thomas Kerrison had practised upon her.

"Kerry," she would say, "you could never think how poor papa must have been tempted to spend that money. I often wish he were alive to see how happy his unselfishness has made me." And Thomas Kerrison would answer, "No good action, Sylvia, goes unrewarded."

# MADELEINE TROWER'S FORTUNE.

*A Story in Four Chapters.*

---

## CHAPTER I.

IT was the habit of all Mr. Rowley's friends to speak in envious terms of the good fortune of his nephew Frank, a young fellow whom the old man had adopted, educated, and to whom he intended to leave the bulk of his comfortable fortune.

Mr. Rowley had been a highly successful man. Beginning life as clerk to a city merchant, he had lived to see himself master of the business, and, as he was wont to boast, all by his own exertions.



"*I'd* never an uncle to work for me," he would say, with a meaning nod towards Frank. "Nobody ever cared to spend I don't know how much that I might be made a gentleman of. No; *I'd* got to push for myself, and I don't know that I was a bit the worse for it either."

From the various circumstances of his life, Mr. Rowley might perhaps be excused for judging all things by one standard, and that standard, money. "How much now do you think it would fetch?" was the invariable test by which he tried all he or his neighbours possessed, and any article with beauty but without intrinsic value was utterly worthless in his eyes. He had a wholesome horror of spending a shilling when sixpence would serve him, and at any time when Frank, ashamed of his meanness, would suggest its being more liberal for appearance' sake, his uncle, fly-

ing into a rage, would use the strongest of condemnatory language, announcing that, as he was worth thirty thousand pounds and more, he'd like to know what reason he had for seeming better than he was. Appearances indeed! he'd leave appearances to those who spent what they'd never earned, and counted as their own that which might never belong to them.

These and like speeches were very galling to poor Frank, who had many a time rued the day when his uncle's choice fell upon him. The boy belonged to a family numerous enough to feel it a relief to have one taken from its number; besides, what a chance it was for him to be brought up by his rich uncle and sent to a first-rate school, and afterwards to live as an independent gentleman!

Frank's father and mother were very strong in this argument when their boy in

his first visits begged to come back home. Aunt Rowley, he said, wouldn't let him move without scolding; if he was in the house, she declared he was ruining the furniture, and if he was out of doors he was ruining his clothes; he didn't care for his aunt nor his uncle, he wanted to come home again, which, plainly showing that the boy did not know what was for his own good, his visits to Lee, where his parents lived, were curtailed; then, by his being sent to school, they stopped altogether, and Mrs. Rowley dying shortly after this, his uncle, as was only natural, felt lonely and could not spare him. Gradually, therefore, the love of father and mother, brothers and sisters, waxed dim, until poor Frank seemed to be never farther removed from them than when he was with them; his mother was dead, his father had married again, and, as Frank many times bitterly told

himself, he really belonged to nobody. His schooldays over, Mr. Rowley sent his nephew to Oxford, with the same injunction with which he had sent him to his various schools: "Mind now, whatever's to be got, you get it," and wo-betide the boy if some more clever or more persevering opponent carried off the prizes. There was no peace for Frank during those holidays; morning, noon, and night he was reminded that he was being brought up and paid for by charity, and that if he didn't work better not a farthing of money would his uncle leave him, every penny should go to his aunt's niece, who, solely with the view of preventing any of her husband's relations from getting his money, Mrs. Rowley had never ceased worrying him to make his heiress. This Mr. Rowley had resolved not to do, but to oppose Mrs. Rowley and continue to occupy one house with her was simply im-

possible ; therefore Mr. Rowley, knowing she had not many months to live, so far succumbed that he executed a will leaving his fortune to his wife's niece and godchild Madeleine Trower ; this he promised her he would keep by him in case Frank ever offended him.

Mrs. Rowley was too sharp a woman of business to be put off by any useless document, and the deed therefore, though as short as possible, was legal and to the purpose. Since his wife's death Mr. Rowley had often been on the point of destroying this will, but each time, after due hesitation, he locked it up again, saying "It is just as well to keep the whip-hand over Master Frank, for should I ever see any signs of nonsense, I don't know but that this would be the best way of knocking it out of him." With a view of further intimidation, and to correct a suspicion of incredulity on the part

of his nephew, the old man had even gone so far as to display this document to Frank ; after that he named it to a few intimates, as a proof that, though he gave the lad his fling and money enough to do as much and more than the sons of various neighbours who he fancied looked down upon him, yet he had but to disobey him, and, hey, presto ! away went his chance to fortune. Each time the young fellow returned from college, he begged hard to be allowed to follow some profession or calling by which he should cease to burden his uncle, but this Mr. Rowley would not listen to.

“But, my dear uncle,” Frank would urge, “if I am never to be or to do anything, where on earth is the good of my studying as I do.”

“Good ! Why the good of getting the money’s value ; and mind, I expect you to

end in being at the top of the tree. A what is it? Senior wrangler!"

Frank shook his head.

"Don't dream of such a thing, uncle, I have not got it in me; I work hard, but I have no great amount of talent."

"Talent be blowed!" exclaimed the old man. "What talent do you think I'd got? And yet I contrived to step out master where I'd gone in man. Stick to it, that's my maxim; and I'd advise you if you want anything from me to let it be yours."

In spite of this advice, however, Frank, although acquitting himself very honourably, did not come out senior wrangler, a fact which made the honours he did obtain worthless, and only a subject of scoffing and ridicule. Besides being goaded on by his uncle's reproaches, Frank Rowley had another impetus to study: he determined that, come what might, he would not bear

his state of bondage much longer, and he felt certain that, with a certain amount of education, a man, although alone and unfriended, must get on; so he curbed his temper, which, naturally inclined to be somewhat fiery, was not improved by his training, and kept his eyes and ears open, hoping among the people he met that he should hear of something likely to suit him. Nothing, however, had turned up yet, and the two months he had been from college had been spent in dancing attendance on his uncle, in dining with him and his few old cronies—men who, like himself, loved a good dinner, and knew of no higher intellectual employment than the study of the money market, and the worth or worthlessness of the various shares and companies. On account of living nearly opposite each other, the principal of these intimates was a Mr. Collins, a man more vulgar and un-



educated than Mr. Rowley, but held in high respect by that gentleman on the score of being the owner of double as much money as he had himself; and Mr. Collins, having betrayed an inclination that an alliance should be entered into between his only child Julia and Frank Rowley, on the plea that "the two fortunes combined would make a pretty bit o' property," Mr. Rowley cordially gave his assent. He had, however, sense enough to perceive the gulf which stretched out between Miss Julia Collins—loud, purse-proud, and vulgar—and Frank, who had the misfortune to be particularly quiet, self-possessed, and gentlemanly. He, therefore, wisely determined not to be in any hurry, but break the matter cautiously and bring the thing round craftily. "I'm determined upon it," he said meditatively, "but I don't want him to see it too plainly."

No such reticence being necessary on Mr. Collins's part, he began to weary of what he termed shillyshally ; the fair Julia, too, had lately given more than ordinary attention to an admirer towards whom her father had a particular objection. "He spends money like water," he said to his friend, "and I hate him ; so just give your nephew a hint not to be so stand-off, but to drop in of an evening, and I'll take the hint and toddle over here."

Mr. Rowley promised to speak to Frank forthwith, and accordingly the next morning, over breakfast, he began, and in answer to Frank's original remark that the weather was still damp, he said "Yes, and its playing old gooseberry with my joints and bones ; they remind me that I ain't quite so young as I used to be." Frank looked up in surprise ; to hear his uncle confess that mortality had any claim over him was

something entirely new, his wont was to impress all his relations, and Frank more especially, that the day of his death was as distant now as ever it was. "Ah, yes!" continued Mr. Rowley; "you think like the rest of 'em that I'm to live for ever, but that can't be. No," he added, with kindly regret at the loss his friends and family would sustain, "as your poor aunt used to say, in the midst of life we're in death, and so it is, so it is."

"What on earth can he be driving at?" thought Frank; "there's something up, I'll wager."

"I should like to see one thing," said Mr. Rowley, "and that is to see you comfortably settled with a nice, sensible wife, Frank."

Frank laughed a little nervously as he answered, "A wife, sir! Dear me, I've never thought of such a thing. In the first

place, I don't know any one to marry, and if I did I have nothing—I'm not in a position to keep a wife."

"Oh! if that's all, I dare say you won't find yourself much at a loss; you've never been in want of cash that I've known yet, and the bank hasn't failed. Besides, a good-looking chap like you, who can parley-voo and do the delightful, ought to get a wife with enough to pay at least her share of the keep."

Frank shook his head. "I know nobody of that sort," he said; "and I don't fancy I should be a good hand at finding one either."

"Then I must look out for you. It won't be the first time I've knocked up a match, by many. Your poor aunt used to say I was first-rate as a go-between; and one thing I will say, all I have had to do with have turned out uncommonly well.

Sam Stephens's wife had a thumping legacy left her by her first husband's aunt; and Joe Grant—'fascinating Joe,' as his chums used to call him—married a customer of ours with ten thousand pounds of her own, and I'm blest if she didn't die before six months was over, and Master Joe steps in for the old girl's property. Now, that's what I call luck."

"Well, yes," laughed Frank, "that is the sort of thing I should like to insure; so you must keep your eyes open for some heiress in a rapid consumption, or rich widow with a mortal disease."

"I can't undertake that she shall have a consumption," said Mr. Rowley confidentially; "but I'll promise you that she shall be an heiress, cut and dried, and ready to hand."

"He must be joking," thought Frank; still he felt uneasy, and wished in his heart

that he could see at what his uncle was aiming.

"Can't you guess now who I'm pointing to?" asked Mr. Rowley, growing tired of beating about the bush, and desirous of entering into the more serious details.

"Not in the least."

"Well, you might, then, for hardly a day passes but you see her."

An awful suspicion rushed across Frank's mind as he repeated, "I often see her?"

"Yes; we met her yesterday, down by the Glebe House."

"Not Miss Collins?" stammered Frank.

"Miss Collins," said Mr. Rowley, throwing himself into his argumentative attitude.

"But, uncle, you're not serious—you can't be."

"Can't be!" exclaimed Mr. Rowley, "Why can't I be. What the deuce do you mean?"

"That I cannot believe it possible that you could seriously propose that I should marry a girl who is vulgar and totally uneducated."

"Uneducated! How can she be uneducated when she was at a first-rate boarding-school for two years and more. She cost her father over a hundred and fifty a-year, I can tell you; and she can play on the piano, and sing in the Italian, and do fancy work; if that ain't being a lady I don't know what is, and you'd be puzzled to tell me, I'm thinking."

It was of no use telling his uncle that Miss Collins's accomplishments consisted of scrambling through two or three pieces, made up of popular operatic airs, obscured by fearful variations; that her songs, got up while under her master at school, were sang with an *abandon* of time, tune, and language that was harrowing to any but

the most stultified listener. Such arguments, when set as a counterbalance to what these accomplishments had cost, would have been lost upon Mr. Rowley, so Frank contented himself by relieving his feelings by saying she was simply odious to him, and that to regard any possibility which might lead to her becoming his wife he resolutely refused.

This decision served as a brand to kindle the flame, and for the next half-hour Mr. Rowley stormed, raved, and threatened, while Frank, in his endeavours to control his own passion—more violent than he had ever known it—scarcely permitted himself to say one word; a silence which so exasperated his uncle that, as a final stroke, he rose up, unlocked his *escritoir*, and taking out two papers, he walked up to his nephew, and, in a voice that shook with passion, asked him which of the two he should put into the fire.



"This one," he said, "leaves all I possess to your aunt's niece; give me your word that you'll do whatever I may wish, and I put it into the fire; if not, I'll burn this one, and if I die to-morrow you're a beggar."

Frank did not answer.

"Which am I to do?" roared the old man. "Answer me, sir, and abide by your answer, for, as we both stand here, I'll keep to what I've said."

"Which of the documents you choose to destroy, sir, lies with yourself. I still refuse to marry Miss Collins, or to do anything which might lead her or you to suppose the decision I have come to is not final."

Mr. Rowley employed the silence which followed in raking and stirring the fire, so that every line of the obnoxious document should be destroyed. Then he carefully replaced the rival will, and locked the

drawer, before he turned and said in a whisper, "Leave the room, sir, and leave my house, too, and never let me see or hear another word from you. Don't answer me," he thundered, seeing Frank was going to speak. "Go!"

Left to himself, Mr. Rowley began to experience the result of his passion; he could hardly steady his voice while he asked the housekeeper, who had come to remove the breakfast, what Mr. Frank was about.

"He's in his own room, sir," said the woman, in terror lest something she should do or say would set him off again.

About an hour later her master summoned her again. "Put up my things and a couple of shirts in the bag, and bring it down here," he said; and when his order was obeyed he told her to send for a cab. "I'm going down to Brighton for a few days,

and mind when I come back the house is clear of Mr. Frank and everything that belongs to him. Tell him what I say, mind."

As he drove to the station he remembered that his lawyer, Mr. Fisher, was at Brighton. "He told me he went down every evening, so I can see him on Sunday and talk over the making of this new will. A Trower have my money! I'd see James Trower hanged before a child of his should touch a farthing of my making. However, I did what I did to please Anne, and it's answered its end in a double way: it kept her quiet, poor soul, and it has rather taken the backbone out of Master Frank, I fancy. By Jove! I never saw a chap turn so white in all my life. A pretty look out if, after spending all I have upon him, I'm to beg and pray and pay. I'll bind him down tight enough this time: if I please, he shall

marry Julia Collins yet. I wonder," he added with a chuckle, "what he thinks of it all by this time? He go! Yes, I think I see him going. Why, he's got nowhere to go to. Somehow, I don't fancy you'll forget the 7th of March in a hurry, Master Frank Rowley!"

## CHAPTER II.

ON the evening of the 14th of March, a family party were seated in the sitting-room of one of the houses in a quiet street leading from the Fulham Road towards Chelsea, which bore on its door the name of Trower. Mrs. Trower was busy in putting the finishing stitches to a garment which her motherly ingenuity had contrived out of a cast-off article belonging to her husband. There was good reason for the justifiable pride with which she viewed her handiwork, "for really," as she said, "when James left off wearing anything, most people would say it was impossible to turn it to any account; but there they are,"

she added, "and very nice they look, too. Here, Maddy," she called to her youngest girl, "lay them on a chair—carefully now. I want your father to see them; he'll be here in a minute or so, for it's gone six. Stir the fire, Lottie, and you and Fanny tidy the room, there's good girls."

The two jumped up with cheerful alacrity to do her bidding. They were good-tempered looking, handy little maidens of thirteen and fifteen, able to battle and romp with their young brother, a sturdy tyrant of eleven, and take care of little Maddy, who, being fair and pale, was looked upon as the delicate one of the family. James Trower, clerk to a mercantile house in the City, had rather a struggle to provide for the numerous wants of his family. He used to say to his friends, that how Charlotte managed as she did was more than he could tell, but she had a wonderful knack of

contriving and putting them to the best advantage ; and certainly, few homes were more happy and contented than the Trowers'. In bygone days, when at rare intervals Mr. and Mrs. Trower would be invited to dine and spend the evening with their prosperous relations the Rowleys, they always returned to their own unpretending dwelling with a feeling of thankfulness. "That's over," Mrs. Trower would say energetically, "and glad I am of it. I know your sister thinks I envy her, James, but, poor soul ! I wouldn't change places with her for untold gold. All she talks about is her complaints, and all she thinks of is what she shall eat and drink ; and as for that Rowley, I haven't common patience to listen to his brag." At which James Trower would give a little quiet laugh, smoothing it down (as he had done the many hard knocks in his life) by saying,

“ Oh ! if it pleases him, he's welcome, my dear, it don't hurt me ; ” but Mrs. Trower, not being such a philosopher, found it very trying to hold her tongue while it was being impressed upon her how very much more one had risen in the world than the other ; the result, Mrs. Rowley covertly hinted, of James having pleased himself in the choice of a wife, and not having married a certain Miss Maccabe, whom the Rowleys had picked out for him. This effrontery it had taken Mrs. Rowley many years to get over, but on the argument of why should Mr. Rowley's relations be thought of more than hers, the adoption of Frank had softened the good lady's animosity to her brother, and she wrote off straightway to him, saying she should call and see him and his wife ; then she invited them to come and see her. She magnanimously offered, if she was allowed to choose the



new baby's name, to become its godmother, and she sent it a robe, of which she said she hoped they would take care, as it cost (she mentioned the price to Mrs. James) six pounds ten, because she mightn't be aware of the value of such things. From time to time some present came to little Madeleine from Aunt Rowley, but these gifts excited no anticipations in the minds of the Trowers, they being satisfied that Frank was being brought up to inherit his uncle's money.

After Mrs. Rowley's death the intercourse between her brother and her husband gradually dropped, and for years, except at rare and casual intervals, they had never met. Madeleine was by this time nearly nine, and still the youngest. James Trower's income had been increased until it had reached two hundred a-year, and Mrs. Trower often said, that when Lottie and

Fanny were got out in the world they should be able to manage to do rather more for Edgar and Madeleine. There was a year or two to wait yet though, and the mother, as she saw the two girls lifting the chairs and pushing into place the heavy, old-fashioned furniture, rejoiced that they were both so strong and healthy. "I don't know who gave you your pale face," she said to Madeleine, speaking out her reflections. "I wish I could pinch some roses into your cheeks."

"I can, mother, let me try;" and Master Edgar pounced upon Maddy, to be fallen upon in his turn by Lottie, who forcibly reminded him that Maddy was a girl—"And girls aren't strong like boys, sir."

"Oh, aren't they?" said Edgar, desisively.

"No, she isn't; she's delicate."

"Oh, that's what you always say. We

get on twice as well without you two, don't we, mother?"

But Mrs. Trower's answer was interrupted by the sound of a key in the door, and amid a general welcome of "Well, father," James Trower, now looking tired, as usual, walked into the room, nodded his head as he took off his hat and coat, depositing them in the passage before he took his accustomed seat, with a something between a grunt and a sigh, and put on his slippers, which it was Maddy's care to see were what she termed "warm and comfy."

"Well, my dear, and what's the news?" asked Mrs. Trower. She always asked this question, to which her husband invariably answered, "Oh! I don't know; nothing particular;" after which he leisurely and by degrees related every occurrence of the day. This evening, though, instead of this

answer he waited a minute, and then said,  
“Why, poor Rowley's dead.”

“La, James! you don't say. Why how  
—what did he die of? Was it sudden?”

“Seems so. He was at Brighton, and  
didn't feel well, and somebody advised him  
to have a hot bath, and he was seized with  
a sort of a fit coming out of it, and never  
rightly recovered himself again.”

“How awful! dear me! Though, poor  
man, he wasn't much of a friend either to  
you or to me, James; but it upsets ye to  
hear of one you've known being cut off in  
a moment. I can see it has you, my dear.”

“Well, I wish we'd been more recon-  
ciled,” Mr. Trower said.

“It certainly wasn't your fault, James,  
that you weren't; but the last time  
that we met at the Clapham station  
he spoke as off-handed as if he thought  
you'd ask him for a five-pound note. I

dare say his nephew won't be as close with the money. It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and I'm sure the young fellow must have had a miserable life of it, what with one thing and another, for when we've been there it's made my flesh creep to hear them nag-nag at the boy; he couldn't speak nor look so as to please them both."

Mr. Trower made no further comment on his wife's remarks; he sat silent and abstracted until tea was brought, and then he said—

"My dears, I want to talk to your mother a little; just go down-stairs for a time, will you?"

Mrs. Trower cast an anxious glance towards her husband, as, after assisting the children to put together their various occupations, she reseated herself.

"What is it James?" she asked softly.

"Why, my dear, a very strange thing has happened; the lawyer has been to me about our little Maddy."

"Oh my, James! you don't say he's left the child something?"

James nodded assent.

"Well I never! Did he say how much?"

"Everything!"

Mrs. Trower's face went red and white by turns; she tried to speak, but only a gasp came, and her husband continued—

"Nobody else has a penny!"

"Frank?" exclaimed Mrs. Trower.

"No; he and the young fellow had a quarrel, and he disinherited him at the last moment."

"What a shame! We must look after him, James. Only to fancy our ever having anything to call our own!" reflected Mrs. Trower, utterly unable to separate the interests of herself and her children.

"You have not heard quite all, my dear, and this is the hard part: if the child has the money, we must give her up to trustees, appointed to have her properly educated and brought up until she's of age. She may come and see us when they think proper, but she isn't to live with us."

"I won't be parted from my child for fifty wills nor fifty fortunes!" exclaimed Mrs. Trower. "The unnatural old brute, I thought he couldn't give ye a rose without sticking a thorn in your finger: Not a bit of it, James; let them bury his money with him, we'll keep Maddy. She shan't be taught to look down at her father and mother, dear child;" and this thought, coupled with the sudden revulsion of feeling, brought a quick burst of tears from Mrs. Trower, while her husband, without answering her, sat looking into the fire with

a troubled gaze. "Don't you see as I do, James?"

James gave a sigh. "My dear, I don't know quite what to say, or what to do, for the best. If Maddy was strong and hearty, I shouldn't hesitate, but she isn't, and we two ain't as young as we used to be, Char, and it would lie heavy with me to leave her alone, or for you to have to work for her; the others will soon be getting for themselves, and a boy can always fight his way, but it isn't the first time I've felt anxious about Maddy. I think, before we decide, we must give it a little serious consideration. The child would not be bound in any way after she is of age. She can then choose to live with those she best cares for. It's a large sum to forfeit. In after life, my dear, she might feel inclined to blame us."

This seemed to put the matter in a new



light, and Mrs. Trower began speculating about every possibility by which the separation might be softened. Finally it was decided that they would sleep upon it; that for the present it would be best to say nothing about it to the children, who were called in to say good night, little Maddy getting so many extra kisses, and such a close hug from her mother, that she said, "I'm very well, mother, ain't I?" For, after the fashion of fond parents, directly either of her children chanced to be ill, all Mrs. Trower's affection was instantly lavished and centred on that particular one.

Not only that night, but for many nights and days, Maddy and her fortune was the one thought of Mr. and Mrs. Trower, until at length the fiat went forth that the child was to leave her home until she was twenty-one, and be given over to her

guardians, for the purpose of being placed at school, educated, and brought up in a manner befitting a young lady possessed of a fortune of fifteen hundred pounds a year. This important training proceeded during ten years, and Maddy has now grown from little Maddy into Miss Madeleine Trower, regarded by all who know her as a most fortunate girl, who, besides her fortune, has to recommend her a fair face and a sweet, amiable disposition. She left school two years since, and now resides with Mrs. Mostyn, the widow of her former guardian. Mr. and Mrs. Trower still live in the same little house in Edith Grove, and thither Madeleine frequently goes; but the distance between herself and her family seems to grow wider each time, and she cannot avoid seeing that she is regarded more as a visitor than one of the same family. Only Lottie remains at home now.

Fanny is employed in a telegraph-office. Edgar, with many sighs, has been permitted to follow his heart's desire, and become a sailor. Mr. Trower still plods to and fro to the City, and should he at his return home find Madeleine, he makes apologies that he is so dusty, and knows they are certain to have tea in the parlour, a room in which he can never take his ease comfortably. Mrs. Trower has no need to turn and contrive now, for Madeleine keeps up the supply of clothes by presents of new dresses to her mother, and others but little worn to her sisters. When she sees these things on Lottie and Fanny, she wonders how it is they look so different, for the two girls are given to wonderful arrangements of hair and violent contrasts of colour, which in any but her sisters Madeleine would denounce as loud. Then, again, on being introduced to the respective lovers of

these young ladies, Madeleine is lost in amazement to think what can induce the girls to care for such odious young men, who call her Miss, have not a word to say before her, but getting into the passage under pretence of going, grow boisterously noisy. In the unaffected homeliness of Mr. and Mrs. Trower there is no trace of vulgarity, but the two girls, unsubdued by age and care, lack the refinement of their parents, and are deficient in what Madeleine has been taught to look upon as good breeding. Mrs. Mostyn, Madeleine's present guardian, is a particularly quiet, ladylike woman, who regards her charge with much pride and affection, and has allotted to her the highest place she can assign to mortal, that of being her only son's future wife. This son is, in his mother's opinion, removed far above the ordinary scale of mankind, and Mrs. Mostyn

has done her best to imbue Madeleine with a belief in Wilfred's talents equal to her own; and very tolerably she has succeeded, so that the little goose thoroughly believes that Wilfred understands all he professes to know, and that things which sound as foolish jargon in her ears are really as wise and clever as he says they are.

Unfortunately for himself, as well as his friends, Wilfred Mostyn has a fortune sufficient to amply supply all his reasonable wants, therefore he can afford to be an idler and indulge his vanity, which is to be thought a critic in all works of art and literature. He eagerly seeks after any one who is talked of, cultivates authors and artists, and listens deferentially to their remarks, which a little later, and before a different audience, he boldly repeats as his own. Never does mystical eloquence strike a shaft so deep but Wilfred Mostyn can

enter into its hidden meanings and discover its (to most persons) impenetrable beauties. He revels in the cloudy dream-land of poetry, seldom condescending to admire anything which can be read by those who run. His hobbies and his indulgence in them had fallen rather hardly on his mother and Madeleine, who for a long time had not ventured to express admiration of anything until it had received Wilfred's approval. Mrs. Mostyn still remained in this state of bondage, but during the last twelve months Miss Madeleine had begun to feel that she had an opinion of her own, and one which she saw no reason for entirely hiding. To Wilfred's horror she had on several occasions dared to admire pictures by artists who took their rules from nature, and had expressed a preference for such poetry and prose as it seemed reasonable to suppose was written by persons

in their right minds. Each time after one of these discussions and differences had taken place, Madeleine would be quite amazed at her temerity, but she would say to herself, "If Wilfred and I are really to marry each other, he ought to know that in some things I do not think about things as he does." Accustomed to see Mr. Mostyn looked up to and admired as he was at home and in the circle in which they moved, Madeleine considered she was very fortunate in having captivated such a man, for Wilfred always plainly showed that he cared for no one so much as he did for her. By the wish of her guardians, Madeleine was not to enter into any engagement until she was twenty-one, and this was a sufficient reason why Wilfred did no more towards securing her than let her see he took it for granted that she knew the honour he one day intended to lay at her feet. To do Mr.

Mostyn justice, Madeleine's fortune in no way influenced his determination to make her his wife. This desire arose solely from his knowledge of her sweet temper, and the disposition she had hitherto shown to be guided, in word, thought, and deed, by him. As he said to himself, and sometimes to his mother, he was not a man to go about falling in love, and if it rested solely with himself he doubted if he should ever marry at all; but as it seemed to be expected of him that he should take a wife, he looked forward to that wife being Madeleine, who understood him and his ways thoroughly, and would not bore him by wanting to break in upon his occupations and studies. These studies consisted in dipping into and dabbling with every topic likely to be advanced in society.

Wilfred had just sufficient talent to skim a subject and turn his skimming to the best



account—a very useful art where the listeners happen to be novices, but dangerous in the extreme if displayed before those who have thoroughly mastered what the speaker has, perhaps, but glanced at. No one was more fully alive to this danger than Wilfred Mostyn, and could his mother and Madeleine have sometimes followed him through an evening, they would have been somewhat amazed at the different shades in his behaviour. His tact gave him that inestimable sense of knowing when to speak and when to be silent, and Wilfred Mostyn in the midst of a set of fashionable amateurs was quite another being from Wilfred Mostyn at some assembly of workers, who had earned or were earning reputations at the cost of hard-spent days and nights without rest—men who were looked to for leaders and articles by which the public taste and opinion would be formed and

guided. Amid such society as this Wilfred had recently met our old friend Frank Rowley, now known under his real name of Halkett. Frank had been pointed out to Wilfred as the writer of some articles which were making a considerable stir, and he was generally pronounced to be one of the rising literary men of the day. Poor Frank! he thought it was high time Fortune took a turn in his favour, for since the day when his uncle had put that will in the fire he had felt many of her "slings and arrows." At that time everything had seemed to culminate towards his downfall—his uncle's sudden death, his father's and his friends' unreasonable displeasure that he had not submitted and kept quiet just a few days longer. "Ah well!" Frank would say, whenever these thoughts presented themselves; "I've managed to get my head well above water, so 'tis best not to rake up

what makes me feel angry and bitter. The only wonder is I did not go straight to the dogs. I believe I should if it had not been for old Fisher; he was the only one to stretch out a helping hand to me, and he is as pleased at my success as if I was his own son."

### CHAPTER III.

"YOU'LL dine at home to-day of course?" said Mrs. Mostyn to her son.

"Why of course?"

"Because of the theatre, dear. You're going with us, are you not? Oh, you must," she added, as she saw him hesitate. "Madeleine will be so disappointed if you do not go."

"Why, you promised us, Wilfred," said Madeleine.

"Did I?"

"Of course you did, and every one says the piece is so good. Now you must come."

Wilfred smiled.

"That's right," said Mrs. Mostyn, who could read every expression of her son's very good-looking face. "I see that he means to go, Maddy."

"Yes," laughed Wilfred, "but only on one condition;" and he turned to Madeleine. "That you wear the dress you wore at the Dubois'. I never saw you look so well."

Madeleine made a profound curtsey.

"I did not mean to," she said. "It is too good, and it cost such a lot of money."

"Nonsense, it's only made of net stuff."

"Net stuff! Why it is tulle, Wilfred."

"Never mind," said Mrs. Mostyn. "If Wilfred likes it you must wear it, dear, and if it gets crushed you must have another."

"Oh! in that case, certainly. I'll get myself up such a swell, Wilfred, that they will put me down for a duchess at the very least."

"I don't think there is any duchess half

so pretty," said Wilfred; at which compliment Madeleine ran off, fearing, she said, lest her head should be turned by such flattery.

"What spirits a little compliment from you puts her in," said Mrs. Mostyn. "She is very fond of you Wilfred."

"Yes, I think, at least I hope, she is. She has improved wonderfully; several men have admired her to me of late. She wants to tone down a little and get more self-composure."

"She is so young yet, my dear, only just over twenty."

"Let me see, she becomes her own mistress next year?"

Mrs. Mostyn nodded assent, hoping her son would say something about their marriage, a prospect which gave her much pleasure; but her hopes were not to be indulged. Wilfred got up, and an end was put to the

conversation by his saying that he should be back in time for dinner, which was to be ordered an hour earlier.

When Madeleine came down in her pretty white dress, Wilfred gave her a look of approval, and indeed any man might have felt well pleased to be her escort. He was glad to see the theatre was filled, and, after taking a survey of the house, he informed Madeleine that he saw several men he knew; but for the present, as the piece was about to begin, they settled down to enjoy it, and until the act was over all their remarks related to the stage and the actors on it. At length the curtain fell, and Madeleine began to look about her.

“That is Halkett, the man I was telling you of,” said Wilfred.

“Where?”

“In the third row; don’t you see a lady

in yellow? Well, exactly in front of her; he is talking to a Colonel Talbot."

As she turned her eyes towards the place indicated, Frank happened to look up, and thus the two who had so influenced one another's fate saw each other for the first time.

"That's a pretty girl with Mostyn," Frank said a few minutes later on to Colonel Talbot.

"Yes. His sister, perhaps. I know that the other is his mother."

"If I happen to come across Halkett, going out, I shall introduce him to you, mother," said Wilfred. "I want to ask him to dinner."

"Do; he is a gentlemanly looking man."

"But not clever looking," said Madeleine.

"I verily believe," whispered Mrs.



Mostyn, "that Madeleine fancies no one can be clever unless like you."

At which Wilfred smiled, and said that he must hear what it was necessary to look like in order to satisfy Madeleine's standard of cleverness; and then a little bantering flirtation took place between them, and Frank Halkett, catching sight of their animated faces, decided that she was not Mostyn's sister.

"Stand here for an instant, mother," Wilfred said, as they were going out; "I see Halkett coming, and I'll introduce him. Ask him for the 20th. If Colonel Talbot should stop, and you can manage to get him too, I should like it; he knows several people I want to know."

Colonel Talbot did stop, and Madeleine watched Wilfred introduce the two men to his mother. Suddenly the sound of her own name caught her ear, and turning,

she saw close behind her—coming from the upper boxes in hats and jackets, their faces radiant with excitement and pleasure—her two sisters, Lottie and Fanny, attended by their devoted swains, and accompanied by a strong-looking hale young fellow, attired in the favourite peaked cap and pilot-coat of the British merchant sailor.

“You haven’t forgotten Edgar?” said Lottie, pushing him towards Madeleine, with the certainty of welcome.

“Oh, no!” murmured Madeleine, while rapidly through her mind ran the idea of what Wilfred and his friends would think. However, think what they might, she could not ignore her own brother and sisters, so she shook hands cordially with them all before she ventured to cast a look at her party. Colonel Talbot had his back turned, Mr. Halkett was still speaking to Mrs. Mostyn; only Wilfred apparently was looking at them, and neither

was his expression pleasant, nor the tone of his voice reassuring, as he said, "When you are quite ready, my mother is waiting for you ; I fear we are keeping her standing in a draught." Madeleine's face crimsoned, not with shame, but with indignant pride; and, with a defiant feeling towards Wilfred, she shook Edgar's hand again, making the great fellow blush as red as herself, as she said—without any lowering of her voice this time—how pleased she was that she had happened to see them; and, bidding good-bye to Lottie and Fanny, she told them she should spend a day with them next week; then she joined Mrs. Mostyn and Wilfred, and followed them to the carriage. Naturally, this little scene was not lost on Frank Halkett and Colonel Talbot.

"A screw loose somewhere," said the latter; "case of save me from my friends, I fancy. Mostyn's face was a study."

"I fear that fellow's a snob," said Frank ;  
" she is evidently not his sister."

" No, I suppose not ; she is uncommonly pretty."

" Very."

And the conversation ended. When Frank was alone, he recalled the circumstance several times, and feeling sympathetic on the score of his own relations, he wondered who Madeleine could be. He speculated whether these people were connections of hers. " If so, she took it very well," he thought ; " and, by Jove ! what a look she gave Mostyn. I guessed that fellow to be a conceited ass, and now I'm sure he is one. I suppose, as I have accepted, I must go there to dinner. I wonder if she'll be there ?" Between this time and the date of Mrs. Mostyn's invitation nearly three weeks had to elapse, and during that interval Frank and Madeleine met twice. The first time,

just as he was passing Mrs. Mostyn's house, in Curzon Street, Madeleine stepped out of a cab, accompanied by Edgar carrying a parrot in a cage and a goodly-sized bunch of feather flowers. It was nearly dark, and Frank's curiosity made him turn round, after he had walked some distance, to see if the young fellow had gone in; he had not, for he was standing as if undecided which direction he should take. A few evenings after, at a concert, he found himself seated at only a little distance from Madeleine, who evidently recognised him, for, in spite of her efforts to look properly unconscious of a gentleman to whom she had not been properly introduced, her eyes betrayed her knowledge. Two or three times during the evening she stole a little sidelong glance in Frank's direction; and it is not recorded that she thought any worse of him because, fearing lest he might be accused of

staring unduly, he had to become suddenly engrossed with his programme or his friend, to whom, oddly enough, he did not point Madeleine out.

When Madeleine returned from the concert—to which she had gone with some friends—she told Mrs. Mostyn that Mr. Halkett had sat not far from her.

“Did he remember you?” said Mrs. Mostyn. “Perhaps not, for he stood with his back towards you the other night.”

Madeleine made no answer; she had not intended to say that she had seen him, because anything which referred to the meeting at the theatre was rather a tabooed subject, it having occasioned between her and Wilfred a very decided misunderstanding, ending in a coolness not yet got over. Mrs. Mostyn had considered it desirable that he should point out to Madeleine the disadvantage of proclaiming to the

world that her relations were not exactly in the same position of life as herself, and Madeleine had, in his opinion, received his advice very ungraciously, giving way to a great deal of unnecessary temper and silly indignation.

“You know, mother,” Wilfred said in reply to various excuses which Mrs. Mostyn was making for Madeleine, “this sort of thing would not suit me, and before Madeleine and I can be anything more to each other than we are, there must be a distinct understanding that she gives up all intercourse with her relations. Good heavens!” —and Wilfred gave a positive shudder— “it would be my death to have that bear of a brother hanging about the house, and to be never safe from those irrepressible young women.”

“My dear,” said Mrs. Mostyn, “I entirely agree with you ; but depend upon it your

influence would be too great over Madeleine for her ever to dream of running counter to your wishes. Once married, I have no fear of her."

Wilfred shook his head, unconvinced. "That is all very well," he said, "but the matter must be settled beyond question beforehand. I can run no risk of incurring scenes for nothing."

"I know that Madeleine is very peculiar about her family. I believe that as soon as she comes of age she intends settling an income upon her parents."

"And quite right," said Wilfred; "I have no thought of interfering should she like to give them half her fortune, only let her give it to them and have done with them."

"Oh! and so she would, my dear. I am sure she doesn't dream of opposing you; but she is very young, and girls at that age



have no idea that it is Quixotic to go against their own interests. Poor little Maddy, she is the last one to do anything of which she thought you disapproved; she has such a sweet, pliable nature, a kind word will lead her any day."

"I don't know that," said Wilfred, looking, as he felt, extremely injured and annoyed; "just at present she is showing a great amount of temper and stubbornness."

"I know, my dear Wilfred, that every word you said was true, and for Madeleine's good; but don't you think that perhaps what you said sounded a trifle too sharp and decisive? You know," she added, fearing to hint at a shadow of wrong in her son, "that we do not all possess your strength of mind; and young girls cannot endure to admit that they have acted wrongly. Come, dear, you must not be too hard upon her."

"My good mother, I have no wish to be hard upon any one, and least of all upon Madeleine; but knowing myself, as I do, I know the folly of running risks; and unless a proper understanding is come to, it might lead to a rift in our lives which might never be bridged over. Once let me discover some lurking likeness between those vulgar, loud sisters and Madeleine, and I should be robbed of all pleasure in looking at her."

"Wilfred, impossible!"

"Perhaps so to you, mother; but some penalty must be paid for all our gifts, and mine is an over-sensitive taste. Once destroy the ideal with which my imagination surrounds each person who inspires me with interest, and the interest is gone. It is not the individuals who charm me, it is the halo with which I surround them."

Mrs. Mostyn sighed; the only meaning

that her son's rodomontade conveyed to her was his immeasurable superiority over young men generally, and feeling it was useless to oppose his giant will, she thought she must contrive by degrees to make Madeleine promise that after she was married she would entirely resign herself to Wilfred's guidance. "Poor Madeleine!" Mrs. Mostyn said to herself, feeling greater sympathy in her heart than she ever allowed her lips to express; for a past experience had taught her by what sacrifices a position in the world of society is often purchased: old friends had been shown the cold shoulder, old days forgotten, old ties broken with, each year she lived. Mrs. Mostyn regretted these things now, but she had not strength of mind to tell her son this, nor to counsel Madeleine against falling under like temptations.

She had, however, the satisfaction of

seeing the coolness between the two she most cared for gradually melt away, and at last it disappeared altogether, and in its place a greater degree of cordiality sprang up; for, in spite of what he had said to his mother, on reflection, Wilfred saw that he had really spoken more decisively than his position warranted, and he strove to make amends for it by increased attentions, which Madeleine very willingly received as a proof that he was sorry that he had spoken so hastily and inconsiderately.

The evening before that on which Frank Halkett was expected had arrived, and some arrangements respecting the dinner were being made by Mrs. Mostyn and her son, when Madeleine said, "Did I tell you that I saw your friend Mr. Halkett at Tarva's concert? I went with the Protheros," she added, wishing to allay any doubts about her surroundings this time.

"Do the Protheros know him?" asked Wilfred.

"I don't think so; they took no notice of him."

"Then you may be sure they did not know him, for people are only too pleased to claim acquaintance with him just at present. I hear he has a splendid article in this week's *Spectator*; he's a rising man, that."

"Who is he to take down to dinner?" said Mrs. Mostyn.

"I hardly know;" and Wilfred ran over to himself the lady guests. "Madeleine, I think."

"Me? Oh, no, Wilfred! I should be afraid to open my mouth to such a clever man."

"And why?" asked Mrs. Mostyn, with an expression in her face which made Madeleine answer, "Oh, I know that I talk to Wilfred, but then he does not mind."

"Come, come, you two," laughed Mr. Mostyn. "Don't be for ever turning your goose into a swan. Halkett and I are not to be named in the same day. He has shown the good stuff that's in him, while I—well, if I have anything in me, I have not taken the trouble to bring it out."

"No, Wilfred, that is your great fault; you are really very idle," said Mrs. Mostyn reproachfully, convinced that indolence alone prevented her son being one of the geniuses of the age.

Wilfred laughed. "Well, perhaps there is something in what you say, but it's never too late to mend, and some day—who knows?" and he looked significantly at Madeleine, as if she was to work this reform. "In the meantime it is settled that Colonel Talbot must take you down, mother, and Madeleine is assigned to Halkett."

On the evening in question, Madeleine

dressed herself with more than usual care, anxious to look her best before Wilfred's new acquaintances, and the final survey she took of herself previous to going into the drawing-room did not displease her. Mr. Halkett was among the last arrivals, and Wilfred had only just introduced him to, what sounded to Frank as, Miss Travers, when the dinner was announced to be served.

In order to break through the ice of a formal introduction, various subjects had to be discussed before Frank ventured to allude to the concert at which they had both been present, and Madeleine having duly expressed her surprise that Mr. Halkett should have remembered her, Frank went on to say that he recognised her once before.

"Yes, I know, when I was getting out of the cab with my parrot;" and they both laughed over the recollection.

"I hope she is a good talker."

"I think she would be, but I am obliged to keep her covered up nearly all day."

"Why?"

"Oh, she will scream, and say all sorts of words she learnt on board ship. I expect every day Wilfred—Mr. Mostyn—will say she ought to go back, and though I do not care for her I should not like to hurt my brother—he took a great deal of trouble to bring her home to me."

"That young sailor fellow is her brother, then," thought Frank, while Madeleine went on: "Edgar says the bird will soon forget it all, and I try to hope he is right, but you know sailors only laugh at things which quite shock other people."

"I have a brother a sailor," said Frank; "he is second mate of a vessel which trades to the Cape. I wonder if there are any parrots out there?"



"Why, do you want one?" asked Madeleine. "Perhaps, if Polly's manners do not improve, you would not mind having her."

"I should be delighted, only you must allow me to introduce the bird as Miss Travers's parrot."

"Trower—my name is not Travers."

"Trower," thought Frank; but before he had time to tax his memory about the name, Wilfred Mostyn appealed to him about some topic of the day, and the conversation became more general. Notwithstanding this, several intervals occurred when he and Madeleine contrived to make themselves very agreeable to each other and when the ladies left the table, Frank's eyes followed Madeleine out of the room with very decided admiration, while Miss Madeleine, as she walked up-stairs, told herself that she liked Mr. Halkett—he was nicer than any one she had met for a long

time; and then to think of his having a brother a sailor, and no better off than Edgar—how odd that was!

“We’re just saying what a handsome man Colonel Talbot is,” said Mrs. Neville, as Madeleine joined the group of ladies who, with Mrs. Mostyn, were standing round the fire. “And though, perhaps, I ought not to tell her so,” added Mrs. Mostyn, patting her favourite’s cheek, “he admires a certain young lady very much.”

“Does he?” said Madeleine, pleased with this compliment to her appearance. “And I like Mr. Halkett very much.”

“So I thought. You seemed to have no difficulty in talking to him.”

“Not a bit. I forgot all about his being so clever; he talks just like any one else—not a bit as Wilfred does.”

“Little flatterer!” said the pleased mother. “Would it be possible for you

to think any one could do anything as well as Wilfred?"

Madeleine laughed as she turned away. She had not intended to convey that meaning; still, as she certainly did hold some such opinions, she did not mind the construction Mrs. Mostyn gave to them. When the gentlemen came up from dinner, Colonel Talbot set himself to make a favourable impression on Miss Trower, so that Wilfred, always delighted to see Madeleine admired by men whose opinions in matters of taste he valued, felt more confirmed than ever in his choice of her as a suitable wife for him, and from that evening his attentions became so much more marked that, except when by some accidental chance his name was mentioned by Madeleine, Frank Halkett was almost forgotten. Madeleine would doubtless have shared the same fate, only that in Frank's mind her memory was

kept alive by the discovery that she was the veritable Madeleine Trower who, by an unlucky turn of Fortune's wheel, had deprived him of the money which Mr. Fisher assured him Mr. Rowley had never intended should belong to any one but Frank. The kind old lawyer had endeavoured to bring this forward at the time of Mr. Rowley's death, but the guardians of Madeleine felt they could do nothing but guard her interest during the term of their trust ; when she became her own mistress she could do whatever she thought proper, so that it had always been in Mr. Fisher's mind that when he delivered up the accounts of the property into Miss Trower's own hands, he should give her the whole story of the quarrel between Mr. Rowley and his adopted son and heir. Over and over again Frank told himself that he was so glad that he had met this girl ; he had so often won-

dered what she had grown into, and he had found her most unaffected and pleasant. He felt he should like to tell her of the link between them, he would like to see more of her, and then he threw aside his papers, exclaiming, "No good could come of such folly," put on his hat, and went out, taking the—with him unusual—direction of the park, about which he strolled until the carriages began to roll away, and then he walked by way of Stanhope Gate and Curzon Street moodily back to his rooms, wondering what pleasure people could possibly derive in going day after day to such a stupid place as that, where there was nothing worth seeing and nobody worth looking at.

## CHAPTER IV.

NEARLY a year had elapsed since the evening which made Frank Halkett acquainted with Madeleine Trower—a busy, prosperous year for Frank, during which he had been left but scanty moments for sighing over his transient fancies. He had not forgotten Madeleine, and whenever a chance meeting had afforded a pleased recognition or a few minutes' gossip, Frank's admiration sprang up afresh, but he was very far from being in the position of a disconsolate lover, and entertained a comfortable certainty that he should remain a bachelor as long as he lived. His prospects had steadily brightened, and he now felt that he was in the fair

way of making a very good income. His old friend Mr. Fisher still managed any business for him, and Frank, having just entered into some new arrangements, was carrying the agreements to Mr. Fisher's office for his inspection. He had not seen the old gentleman for a long time. Mr. Fisher was beginning, he said, to take life more easily; he no longer came up to London daily from Redhill, where he lived, and though Frank had a standing invitation to Oak Lodge, he had not been able to avail himself of it. He was delighted to hear that Mr. Fisher himself was at the office on this day, and was accordingly shown in.

“What a curious coincidence!” exclaimed Mr. Fisher. “To think of your coming to-day!”

“And why not to-day?” asked Frank.

“Because not ten minutes ago a person

left me who has very greatly influenced your life; no other than the young lady to whom, by mistake—for he never intended it—our poor friend left the money which should have been yours.”

Frank's face brightened. “I'm glad you have seen her,” he said. “And what do you think of her?”

“You know they took all they could take out of my hands; but some months ago, when she came of age, there were certain business matters which necessitated our having some personal intercourse, and we met several times, and I suppose I managed to gain her good opinion, for, instead of going to Banks and White, she has come to me about settling a life annuity on her parents. Do you know, I really think she is a very nice girl.”

“I think she is,” said Frank.

“Why, do you know her, then?”



"Yes; I met her last year at the Mostyns."

"Ah! she lives with them. What sort of people are they?"

"I know very little of them. I see the son occasionally, and he asked me to dine there. Of course I did not then know who Miss Trower was."

"No, no, certainly not. I fancy that she is going to marry the son."

"Yes, so I hear."

"Dear me! How very strange! She has no notion, I suppose, who you are?"

"Not the least. I might have told her, had an opportunity presented itself; but, except that one evening, I have never seen her for more than ten minutes at a time, and then we have been surrounded by other people."

"How oddly people meet," said Mr. Fisher. "Strange to say, we were speak-

ing about you. I happened to mention the circumstances of your uncle's death, and she was so interested about you that I promised her that she should meet you."

"Oh, better not!" said Frank. "I don't much care for the man she is going to marry, and I think we had better let things remain as they are."

"Well, I gave her a promise that she should meet you, and, if I could, I should like to keep it. I don't see that any harm could come of it."

"Not any," said Frank, not unwilling to become better acquainted with Madeleine "If you really wish it, I have no objection."

"That's right. Then I'll speak to Mrs. Fisher, and let you know. Now then as to your business. I want to hear all you've been doing. Why, it must be close on a year since I saw you last."

As is frequently the case, the announcement of Madeleine's engagement was somewhat premature. The world she moved in had settled the marriage months before Wilfred made his formal proposal, which he had done about a fortnight before the day on which Madeleine had gone to Mr. Fisher's office. Madeleine had accepted this proposal, feeling certain that, once engaged to her, Wilfred would devote himself more to her, and that a perfect understanding would exist between them. But in this she was disappointed. The only privilege Wilfred assumed was his right to dictate. He said he hated displays of affection, and considered it was bad taste to inflict your personal feelings on those who could not by any possibility be interested in them. Already the lovers had had several misunderstandings, and Madeleine was not the only one who felt dissatis-

fied. Over and over again Wilfred asked himself if he had not made a mistake in fettering himself with domestic ties.

Mrs. Mostyn smoothed down these difficulties as cleverly as she could, urging a speedy marriage as the most effectual way of insuring Madeleine's entire subjection and obedience. "It is but natural," she said, "that the child should want to display her triumph, Wilfred. Women have a very short reign, and we all like to show the power we have gained. You can well afford to laugh over dear little Maddy's occasional caprices."

But Wilfred could not laugh over what chafed and annoyed him, and he made up his mind that an end must be put to this nonsense; and therefore, if they were to be married, the sooner it took place the better.

An opportunity for urging this occurred when Madeleine was telling him of the visit

she had made to Mr. Fisher's, and the arrangements she had entered into to provide for her parents. Against none of this did Wilfred raise an objection. He said he thought she had only done what was right and proper, and he advised her to augment the sum she proposed giving to her sisters on their marriage, and this brought him to their own wedding.

"Which, by the way, Madeleine, I should like to be a very quiet one. You have not set your heart on having a dozen bridesmaids, have you?"

"Oh, indeed, no!" laughed Madeleine.  
"I detest a fuss as much as you do."

"I have been wondering whom we had best ask to give you away. Sir John Smythson would do it, and so would General de Carteret."

Madeleine felt her heart begin to beat. She had always been sure that she should

have a struggle whenever this question came to be discussed. However, she thought that she knew Wilfred well enough to feel certain that, when she showed him that she regarded what she meant to do in the light of a duty, he would not oppose her further.

"I think there is but one person to give me away, Wilfred—my father. Stay," she said, putting her hand on his, and delaying his answer. "I know that he is not in the position of life I should wish to see him in; still I am his child, Wilfred—we must not forget that. I trust I shall never do so."

"I think you have already given them a very substantial proof of your sense of duty, Madeleine," said Wilfred, in a cold, measured tone of voice. "Very many men might, and not unreasonably, have raised an objection to your parting with this yearly sum from your income. I have never said one word to you, except that I

wished you to do whatever you thought right ; and had you thought it right to settle upon them double the sum you have, not one word against it would you have heard from me. But here my reticence comes to an end ; and without entering into a discussion which would naturally be painful to us both, I must definitively say that I entirely object to your father or any of your family being asked to our marriage." He paused, but Madeleine made no answer, and thinking by the expression on her half-averted face that she was being convinced of the expediency of this decision, he judged it best to settle the whole matter about these awkward relations at once, and so have no more reverting to it. He therefore continued : " You know, Madeleine, dear, that in matters such as this you must trust to me, as naturally possessing more knowledge of the world than you do. Except in name,

you have nothing in common with your family, there can be no actual affection existing between you ; and, beyond a certain sense of duty, there is nothing to bind you together ; that duty you have amply fulfilled by assuring to them for the rest of their lives ease and affluence. You can do no more. Therefore, I think you will see with me that after your marriage it is best for you and your sisters and brother to meet, if you ever should meet, as strangers. Put it all on me. Say that such is my wish, and they will have the sense to understand that you have formed new ties which must naturally influence you. If in the course of time either of your parents should be ill, and should wish to see you, of course I should never dream of putting the slightest restraint on your actions ; but as matters stand now, there is no earthly reason for your keeping up a connection



which, under many circumstances, when you are my wife, would vex and displease me."

"Then am I to understand," asked Madeleine in a low voice, "that I am not to ask my father or mother or any of my family to be present at my marriage?"

Wilfred made an assent. "There is not the slightest necessity for it, darling."

"And," she continued, "after our marriage, it is your wish that I should write and tell them I do not intend henceforth to know them or acknowledge them?"

Not exactly relishing her tone of voice, Wilfred answered rather less affectionately, "I do not know that there is any necessity for using those exact words."

"Still, that is your meaning?"

"Precisely."

"Then," said Madeleine, looking him straight in the face, "under such conditions

I must beg to decline the honour of being placed in a position which would oblige me to carry out your wishes. I never intended forcing my family upon you, Wilfred. My father and mother have always shown a marked avoidance of thrusting themselves where they saw that they were not wanted, and I am certain they would not have obliged their child to point out to them that her husband held them so immeasurably inferior to himself. However, I am very glad that you have spoken to me so plainly."

Wilfred's temper was now fairly roused. "If our views on this matter are so widely different, I am very glad too," he said. "I always intended that you should not be mistaken about my decision on this subject. I argued the point from a sensible, or, as you put it, a worldly, view some months since; and unless I had felt

you were convinced that all I said was true, I certainly should never have placed myself in—in a false position.”

“The matter is very soon ended,” said Madeleine warmly. “I never intend to renounce my parents at any one’s bidding.”

“And I never intend to take a wife who does not hold my wishes above all other minor considerations.”

“Then there is no use in prolonging an unpleasant discussion;” and Madeleine rose up as if to leave the room.

She felt that in a few minutes more she should break down; if Wilfred expressed one word of regret, the tears, which even now stood in her eyes, would pour down in a torrent.

But Mr. Mostyn was far too injured and aggrieved to say a soothing word. He drew himself up with all the dignity he could command, and said ironically—

“I sincerely hope that you may have no difficulty in finding a husband who will feel a pride in ranking himself second in your regard to your family.”

Madeleine forced back her tears, and answered, “I thank you.”

Then she drew off a ring, which she laid on the table near him, and walked out of the room. She did not venture out of her own room again that evening, fearing that Wilfred would see her eyes red and swollen from tears of disappointed hopes and wounded pride. Several times Mrs. Mostyn asked for admittance, but Madeleine said she must ask her to excuse coming in until the morning.

The next morning Mrs. Mostyn was very pleased to notice that, notwithstanding Madeleine said she was all right again, and that her headache was quite gone, she looked very pale, and was not able to eat

any breakfast. "Poor child!" the mother thought—for of course Wilfred had given her a long account of his grievances—"it is very hard for her; but I can see she is coming round; and Wilfred must meet her half way, and at least let her see her parents now and then. Her disposition is so affectionate—almost too affectionate for her own happiness." And later in the morning, seeing her looking pre-occupied and silent, Mrs. Mostyn put her arms round the poor girl, and drawing her towards her, said—

"Don't fret, Maddy dear, it will all come right. You know that Wilfred always says a great deal more than he means."

And at this sympathy Madeleine's tears fell afresh, and watered well the newly-made grave of her love. She had quite decided that, come what might, never should

the day dawn which would see her the bride of Wilfred Mostyn.

"Decked with all the dainties of her season's pride," fair May had come, clothing the hawthorns with their fragrant beauty, bidding the nightingales send up delicious bursts of melody, penetrating every nook and corner of nature's wide domain, with an air of freshness. Seated together at the breakfast-table, Mr. and Mrs. Fisher looked out with pride and pleasure at their goodly-stocked old-fashioned garden, each giving vent to a sigh of regret that any one should be forced to remain in London when the country was so lovely.

"I am sure those young people will enjoy it," said Mrs. Fisher.

"Miss Trower is so fond of flowers. By what train do you expect her?" asked Mr. Fisher.

"By the one o'clock. Miss Gibbons is

going to Sydenham, so they will come so far together."

"A very nice woman for her to be with," said the old gentleman. "She intends staying there until her family are quite settled in their new home, which they will now be very shortly."

"At Hendon, is it not?"

"Yes, and very fortunate, they were to get it, for it's just the thing Mr. Trower wanted. It belonged to a friend of Frank's; and when Miss Trower mentioned that her father wanted a cottage, not too far from London, with a little garden ground, Frank spoke of this place; and they all drove down, were delighted with it, and the thing was settled."

"I hope Mr. Halkett has no engagement which will prevent him from coming down to-morrow," said Mrs. Fisher anxiously.

"My dear, has it not occurred to you

that wherever Miss Trower is concerned Frank never has an engagement?"

"I think she likes him," said Mrs. Fisher.

"Well, I don't know about that; I think he likes her."

"Do you?" and Mrs. Fisher looked a little doubtful. "Well he does not pay her the attention I have seen him pay to some young ladies."

"Ah, I take no notice of that," said the old gentleman.

"Oh, don't you!" exclaimed his wife testily. "Then indeed I do, Mr. Fisher, and so does Miss Trower, for she said at the Lockwoods that any one would think Mr. Halkett was desperately in love with Lucy Gledhow, though she agreed with me in wondering what he could see in such a girl."

Mr. Fisher chuckled greatly over this little



speech ; it augured well for his scheme which was to bring Frank and Madeleine together—a plan he had been bent upon accomplishing for the last six months. Frank and Madeleine were now firm friends, and had been so ever since she had been told who he was. Drawn together by a similarity of position, Madeleine could speak more openly to Frank than to any one else—he understood how she felt towards her family. To him she had spoken openly about Wilfred Mostyn, and the reason why her engagement with him had been broken off. At the present time Mr. Mostyn was in Paris, and Mrs. Mostyn was in attendance upon a sick brother-in-law, to whom Wilfred was heir presumptive, so that Madeleine had found it necessary as well as convenient to find another home ; this she did with Miss Gibbons, her old governess, and though Mrs. Mostyn refused to suppose that this arrangement was any-

thing but a temporary one, Madeleine had determined that as long as Wilfred Mostyn lived there she would never return to Curzon Street. She hardly knew what she intended her ultimate plans to be. Neither—until her parents were installed in their new abode, and her sisters married, which they were to be on the same day—was a decision necessary. It was highly probable that as a continuous residence she might find Hendon somewhat dull, but she meant to call it home, and two very pleasant rooms were set aside by Mr. and Mrs. Trower as belonging to their thoughtful, loving child, Madeleine.

During the past months Frank Halkett had not done anything wonderful in the way of literary composition—a circumstance which dispirited him woefully, as he was filled with a feverish desire to make a great name, to be spoken about and talked of, so

that Madeleine might hear of him. Poor Frank ! he no longer deceived himself as to the fact that he was over head and ears in love. But of what good was that, when he had no adequate income to offer. And if he had, he was quite sure that she never gave him a thought, that she regarded him only as a friend, and that her heart still belonged to that insufferable fool Mostyn ; instead of which Madeleine, having come to a tolerably correct estimate of Wilfred, often compared the two men, with a considerable balance of favour on Frank's side. Still the girl had experienced a very rude wrench, and though it had brought out much of the good which lay within her, it had taken from her a certain amount of buoyancy and trust, and she every now and then doubted whether true love still existed. Frank had never breathed a word of his feelings towards her ; he was not at any

time an adept at flirting and saying soft nothings, and just now his powers in that line seemed to have vanished altogether. He felt the reality too deeply to play at love-making, so that Madeleine told herself she was quite certain Mr. Halkett did not think of her in any other way than as a sister; and then, after the fashion of young girls, she would sigh and think it very probable she should never marry, but live an old maid, the fairy godmother of Frank's children, to whom it would be only fair she should leave the greater part of her fortune. During the first two days of her visit to Oak Lodge, Mr. Fisher took upon himself to show her some of the beauties of the neighbourhood, and during their walks the conversation ran much upon Frank. The old gentleman spoke of his early struggles, of his energy, his independence, the help he gave to his family, and gradually, without

seeming to tell it, he put Madeleine in possession of the exact way by which she became the inheritor of Mr. Rowley's fortune.

"Mr. Fisher," she said, the next morning, "I have been thinking over all you said to me. I feel convinced Mr. Rowley never intended that I should have all his money, and it would not be right for me to keep it all. I shall insist on Mr. Halkett dividing it with me."

Mr. Fisher's eyes twinkled. "That is a very generous proposal, my dear young lady, for you to make, but I fear our friend will hardly be induced to accept it."

"Oh! but he must; we must make him, Mr. Fisher."

"Well, my dear, speak to him yourself on the subject this afternoon. I will contrive to give you an opportunity of so doing." And the incorrigible old match-maker

nearly laughed aloud, so confident was he in the result of such an offer. Therefore, when Frank had arrived and luncheon was over, Mr. Fisher begged his wife would pay a call with him, and he asked Madeleine to entertain Frank while they were absent. With a view to this the two strolled about the garden, and finally seated themselves in the quaintly-fashioned summer-house, which looked into a grand old park beyond, and here Madeleine, with many a blush and not a few tears, repeated to Frank the story which had been told to her, and she ended by begging that, in justice to them both, he would in future share the fortune with her.

“You must not ask it of me,” Frank said, with a voice which was unsteady as her own. “I could not, Madeleine, indeed I could not. Some day, if I ever make a name, or achieve any success, I shall come and lay it at your feet and ask you to give

me a little hope that—" and, to Frank's dismay, at the door appeared Mr. Fisher, who, forgetting how small account lovers take of time, fancied all must be settled between them long since.

Madeleine tried to recover herself. "Mr. Fisher," she exclaimed, "you must speak to him, he says he will not take it."

The old gentleman saw he had arrived too soon, so turning to go he said: "I commend him, my dear; at his age, if I could not have obtained the giver, I would not have accepted the gift."

When Madeleine glanced towards Frank, these words seemed written on his face.

"Yes, Madeleine," he said, in a trembling voice, "I must have all or nothing."

There was a minute's pause, and then Frank felt a little hand steal into his, and a whisper said, "I did not know that you cared about having me, Frank."

## FAIR MARGARET.

---

### I.

**J**UST above the middle height, with a figure that only needs a little more roundness to be perfect, and a face whose eyes are grey and tender, mouth laughing and dimpled, complexion soft and pale, as accords best with the thick braids of silky hair which crown the small well-set head—such at nineteen is the picture of Margaret Severn, the acknowledged belle of Ashgate, and, in the eyes of the man who gazes at her so earnestly, the most lovely and lovable woman the world contains.

“Margaret, you must listen to me. I—



I've made up my mind to speak to you seriously before you go away, and——"

"Now, Cousin John, I know what you are going to say"—and Margaret gives a little shake of her head. "Nonsense," she continues in a coaxing voice, "let things be as they are; it's much better."

But her companion's face flushes scarlet.

"I wish you would not call me Cousin," he says sulkily; "and as for leaving things as they are, that is very well for you to say, Margaret—you who don't care where I am, or where I go, or what, becomes of me, while I—oh! why can't I make you feel how I love you!" he added passionately; "I don't know a moment's peace for thinking about you. I am always trying to see you, and meet you to—to——"

"Worry me," she puts in pettishly. "I don't believe there is another man in the world so fond of forcing himself where he

isn't wanted as you are; and as for the word 'No,' I begin to doubt whether you comprehend its meaning. I am sure I have said 'No' to you twenty times during the last six months, and yet you go on putting the same silly question to me."

"I am sorry I should be such a source of annoyance to you, Miss Severn; but I will take care it shall be the last time I give you cause to complain."

"So you've said a dozen times before," says Margaret composedly.

"However, I mean it this time."

"So, I suppose, you have at others;" and Margaret assumes a little doubting smile.

The young fellow made a great effort to still the beating of his heart which threatened to drown his unsteady voice altogether.

"I tell you what it is, Margaret," he

said, "you have often told me I was foolish, you have often said hard things to me, but you never sneered at me before. I see that I have made myself ridiculous in your eyes. I have laid my love at your feet, notwithstanding you have spurned it, and now you trample upon it and me." And he turned away his face to hide from her his strong emotion; but in a minute, looking at her with more fire in his eyes than Margaret had conceived possible, he went on rapidly, "But I'll play the fool no longer; it's fit a man should be despised who begs and implores to be taken for pity's sake. I have brought this upon myself. However, it is not too late to mend; and I swear, Margaret Severn, that you shall never again have cause to complain of my importunities. I have the honour to wish you a good afternoon; and, as I may not see you again before you leave, I hope your stay at

---

Brighton may prove as agreeable as you anticipate."

And to Margaret's utter amazement John Ingle walked rapidly away, leaving her gazing after him in blank astonishment. Then, bethinking herself that he would most probably repent and return, she set off at a brisk pace in the opposite direction toward her home; but the stile was reached, and Margaret had to scramble over it without John rushing up breathless and penitent to assist her. She half walked, half ran across the meadow where the vicious bull was kept; but no John arrived to beg her not to fear, as he inwardly sighed to think how little chance there was of this much-maligned beast giving him an opportunity of proving his devotion.

At last Margaret found herself at Ashgate, which was only five minutes' walk from her home; and then she could not

help turning and looking round. There lay the landscape, rich with the russet browns of a fine October. Across Ashgate Common the afternoon sun was slowly sinking; the geese were cackling, as they waddled out of the little pond, and began to settle themselves down close together. The children's shouting, merry voices told that school was over; and two old women stood gossiping together, while they eased themselves for awhile of the brushwood they had been gathering; but no John. It was plain he did not intend to make such a hasty repentance as usual.

"I declare he is sulky," thought Margaret. "Ah! I'll make him pay for this to-morrow, when he comes to see us off. What next, I wonder! I suppose he thinks, because he chooses to pester and worry me, that I am to listen to all his nonsense. It's of no use; if I were to live to be a hundred,

I should never be in love with him. In love with John Ingle!" she laughed outright at the bare thought; "why, he is only three inches taller than I am, and he has red hair, and everybody calls him Johnnie. Exceedingly obliged to you, Mr. Johnnie Ingle, but you're not quite the style of man to win Margaret Severn."

Thinking thus, she walked quickly up the lane towards the old-fashioned house where she lived. As she entered the dining-room Mrs. Severn looked up, and seeing her daughter was alone, she said in a disappointed voice—

"Oh, I hoped you would have met John Ingle, and that he would have told me about the trains; for, really, Bradshaw is more than I can manage."

Margaret did not say anything, but went to her mother's side, knelt down, and tried

to make out the puzzle of cross trains and by-stations.

“Perhaps papa knows,” she said, after considerable study, which apparently had resulted in her being left half way on the road, and unable to get any further.

Ashgate was rather out of the world, and was situated at about equal distance from two towns, both boasting of a railway, by which you could be put down at a certain point, whence, with another change, you might reach Brighton, where Margaret’s aunt, the widow of a rich merchant, had invited her to stay. It was the first real outing the girl had ever had ; and her two cousins had written glowing accounts of the gaieties they were looking forward to enjoy with her.

Mr. Severn was by no means a rich man ; he had to provide for half-a-dozen boys and girls, besides Margaret, who was the eldest.

So his practical sister thought that, with her niece's personal advantages and her own remarkably clever chaperonage, the Brighton visit might end in a marriage; which was highly desirable, as she said, for a girl with no fortune, and the eldest of a large family.

Mrs. Severn smiled over the hint contained in her sister-in-law's letter of invitation. She had not the slightest doubt but that Margaret would marry; still she was in no hurry for that event to take place; and as these suggestions made the proud mother recall the neighbouring gatherings, where Margaret invariably carried off the palm, she said, with something between a smile and a sigh, "Poor Johnnie! I fear he has not much chance." Many mothers would have been a little vexed at this; for (notwithstanding Margaret's indifference) Johnnie Ingle was looked upon as *the* parti



of Ashgate—for he had a very nice estate of his own, and an income sufficiently good to gratify the wants of any moderate-minded woman.

Margaret could not remember the time when John Ingle was not her devoted slave. He was always at hand if she needed assistance; and the moment he could win a smile from his provokingly fair charmer, forgot the many rebuffs his suit had met with. Daily he arrived with books, flowers, and excuses of all descriptions; went messages; executed commissions; all of which services Miss Margaret received right royally, occasionally defending her exactions to herself by saying, "He need not do it unless he liked."

By degrees, also, Mrs. Severn and the children came to take it for granted that anything they could not themselves accomplish or obtain had only to be put on one

side until they had a visit from Cousin John (as Margaret would teasingly call him). If by any means it was to be done, he would do it. Poor John had looked very glum, when Margaret, radiant with delight, told him of her invitation and the prospects of enjoyment it opened up. Further on he had said that he rather fancied he should take a day or two down there himself.

But this proposal met with no encouragement from Margaret, who said afterwards to her mother that she had no wish to be pestered with John Ingle at Brighton; she had quite enough of him at home.

“Ah, well!” said Mrs. Severn; “I don’t know what you or any of us would do without him; although I know that if I were Johnnie you might wait a long time before you got any attention from me. And as you see more of life, Margaret,

you'll find that there are not many John Ingles in the world."

At this Margaret only pursed up her face, with an expression which said, as plainly as if she had spoken, that she should not break her heart on that score.

The morning arrived for Margaret's departure; but John did not come. Mrs. Severn worried over her fears about the trains not meeting, and the lock of the portmanteau not being safe, and several other small bothers; keeping up a sort of chorus of, "I wonder how it is John has not been here," until Margaret was at length goaded into saying, "Why should he come, mamma? I bade him good-bye the last time I saw him." Yet, in her heart, she felt more angry with him than she had ever done before; and when the train was fairly off without his having appeared, she determined to pay Mr. John

out the next time they met for not coming to see her off, as was his wont. What a bother she had found it to get her ticket, and see that the stupid old porter had her luggage safe! for Mr. Severn was far too gouty to get out of the little pony-carriage in which he had brought his daughter and her boxes to the station.

“It shows what a horrid temper he has,” thought Margaret. “A very nice thing to be tied to a tyrant like that. However, I don’t care; he’s nothing to me, that’s one thing.”

It was very fortunate for the poor tyrant that his mistress’s vanity could not be gratified by a sight of him; for, to quote his own words, he had never before realised what an unruly beast he was. When he had sworn that Margaret should never again have cause to complain of his importunities, he little thought what his vow

would cost him. Fifty times he wished he could unsay the words; although his common sense told him that he had only done what, perhaps, would have been better done long ago, before she had so entwined herself round his heart.

“Of course,” he sighed, “she’ll meet with lots of fellows down there—good-looking and able to do the things that please girls; but nobody will ever love her better—that’s one thing they can’t do;” and he hugged this poor consolation, as he went about his farm and looked after his various duties.

## II.

NOTWITHSTANDING all her anxieties, Margaret arrived quite safely at the station, where her aunt met her, saying that she was very glad to see her, and to see how improved she was. Carry and Bertha

would be delighted to have her with them. Margaret could scarcely listen to Mrs. Stephenson's remarks, so great was her surprise at the gay aspect the place presented; and when they emerged from Ship Street and were amid the throng of the Parade, she exclaimed—

“Oh, aunt! is it always like this? How lovely! Thank you so much for having me.” And Mrs. Stephenson pressed her niece's hand, smiling kindly at her naïve enthusiasm, and thinking, as she did so, “I had no idea she would have turned out so pretty as she is. I'll ask Mr. Prosser to luncheon to-morrow; he'd be a capital match if she could get him. I think he said he admired fair girls, and, of course, *he* can't want money.”

“How old did you say you are, Margaret?” she inquired, breaking silence again.

“Nineteen last month, aunt.”

“And Bertha is just twenty. You will be nice companions, and will show each other off well. Bertha is dark and tall; she is considered a very fine girl, and has several admirers.”

As Mrs. Stephenson had said, her daughters seemed delighted to welcome their cousin. They quite squabbled over the question who should walk with her, praised her beautiful hair and fair complexion, tried all their bonnets and hats on her, and were quite anxious that her dress should be pretty and becoming; more particularly on the evening after her arrival, when she made, what they considered, her *début* at a ball given by the officers of the regiment stationed there.

“We’ll introduce you to such good partners,” said Bertha, who was in quite a flutter of excitement, and more anxious

than usual that she should look her best. "You're certain to get plenty of attention, Margaret, for I know several men who rave about fair girls."

And certainly Bertha proved a true prophetess, for from the time they entered the room Margaret seemed to be in a whirl of delight. Everything was so new to the fresh country girl, filled as she was with the spirit of enjoyment. The rooms, the music, the varied dresses, the gay uniforms, mixed themselves into an enchanted chaos, from out of which only one figure stood distinct and visible; and about this striking individual Margaret was silently thinking, as they drove home, recalling all the pleasant speeches he had made to her, in every one of which lurked some hidden compliment, when Caroline roused her by saying—

"I'm so glad you got introduced to Captain Curzon, Margaret; we've been



dying to know him for ever so long. His mother is Lady Selina Curzon, and they are well connected."

"He's going to call to-morrow," said Bertha. "I managed to lead up to it when we were near mamma, and she asked him. We must make him stay luncheon and go to the Pavilion with us, mamma," she added; but poor Mrs. Stephenson, worn out by the heat of the rooms and the lateness of the hour, was reclining in a corner fast asleep. "Won't the Thompsons be in a rage, for we must see and keep him with us all the time. Mind you don't let him go, Margaret."

At this Margaret smiled, and sank back again into her pleasant reverie.

### III.

BEFORE a fortnight had passed Captain Stanhope Curzon seemed to be constantly

with Mrs. Stephenson's party. He walked and rode with them, lingered near them on the pier, met or attended them to afternoon teas, concerts, theatres, or whatever amusement they were bent upon going to; and during these opportunities, which he made the most of, he contrived to thoroughly captivate Margaret's fancy, and also to make Miss Bertha Stephenson determine that, if she could possibly manage it, she would be daughter-in-law to Lady Selina and cousin to the several noble families to whom that illustrious female was related. To carry out this view she said one morning to her mother—

“I wish you'd contrive that Margaret should walk more with that horrid little Prosser. I thought you intended making a match there.”

“Well, I think he admires her. Captain Curzon said yesterday he fancied he was seriously smitten.”

“Captain Curzon does not think she has colour enough,” Bertha said, after a pause. “I thought *he* was struck with Margaret at first, but he isn’t; he says she is not his style of beauty.”

Mrs. Stephenson looked at her daughter sharply. “I don’t fancy,” she said, “that the Curzons are at all well off.”

“But they’re aristocrats,” replied Bertha, “they visit with all the best people;” and before the young lady took her departure she added, “I should give Margaret a hint about Mr. Prosser if I were you, he’d be a first-rate match for her.”

Although Mrs. Stephenson did not give her niece the desired hint, in compliance with her daughter’s advice, she so contrived it that Margaret had to put up with Mr. Prosser as her cavalier during their promenade that morning. And a very dull companion she thought he must consider

her; for she felt certain that Captain Curzon was equally disappointed at having to walk with Bertha, whom he did not admire, because she was dark, and he had said he could see no beauty in dark women. Margaret's fair cheeks deepen as she recalls the volumes of unspoken admiration his dark eyes have betrayed whenever they rested on her. Captain Curzon has never in words said anything about his love; yet, in spite of their short acquaintance, Margaret feels certain that he does love her, and the knowledge sets her heart beating more violently than any of poor John Ingle's passionate declarations have ever done. And through fear of betraying herself in any way she draws herself sharply up, and suddenly begins to assume an interest in Mr. Prosser.

Mr. Prosser is highly conversational, having made up his mind to be exceedingly

agreeable, and Margaret soon finds that she need not pay much attention to his capital stories, which he finishes with a laugh and an exclamation of "Yes, very good, very. By the way that puts me in mind of—," and off he goes again with another recollection, the narration becoming somewhat involved by being interlarded with "Miss de Castro, niece to Lady Johnson—don't you know her?—jolly girl; met her last year at Scarborough; Briggs is awfully sweet upon her. You know Briggs?—little man, limps, wears an eye-glass; nephew to Colonel Green—Lincolnshire Greens, you know; funny old man; very tall, bald head"—and so on about every person with whom he exchanges recognition.

"He made me feel quite giddy—just as one does on board a steamer when the paddle-wheel goes on, on, on, and won't

leave off for an instant," Margaret exclaimed, on her return, feeling dreadfully cross with the unfortunate young man. Although she saw that Captain Curzon lingered talking to Bertha, with the hope that he might have a word with her, Mr. Prosser wouldn't hurry, and Captain Curzon had said sarcastically, "I hope you enjoyed your walk;" and that horrid little creature must needs answer, "I should rather think we have, eh, Miss Severn? Hope to be as fortunate again to-morrow." Then Captain Curzon had bidden her good-bye quite coldly, but with such a sorrowful look in his eyes that, if Margaret had not vented her indignation in abusing poor Mr. Prosser, she would have cried with vexation.

"My dear Margaret," said her aunt, "you really should not say such things. Mr. Prosser is an excellent young man;

besides, he admires you very much, and, let me tell you, he is not a person to be despised by any young lady. Why, do you know he has £4,000 a-year?"

"I should think the same of him, aunt, if he had £40,000 a-year. I'm sure I don't despise him," she added, seeing a look of displeasure cross Mrs. Stephenson's face; "but I do hope he won't choose to walk out with me again. It has given me quite a headache to listen to him, though I hardly remember a word he said;" and she went out of the room to take off her hat and jacket.

"It's of no use entering into any argument with her now," Mrs. Stephenson said, answering her daughter's inquiring looks; "but I shall speak again of this. She is evidently put out by something at present."

"Why, of course, it's about Captain

Curzon," said Caroline; "and in spite of what you say, Berty, he does pay her heaps of attention."

"Yes," replied Bertha triumphantly; "and to-day he let out the reason. He's so awfully afraid of its being thought he's after money, and it seems somebody has been talking about us to him, and I expect hinting at why he comes here."

"I think he's a very kind-hearted young man," put in Mrs. Stephenson; "for he said the other evening that naturally Margaret must feel the want of accomplishments with both of you. I told him that, from your uncle having a large family, and not over abundant means, she had never had the advantages, poor child, that I should have liked her to have; and I noticed afterwards that he sat by her each time Bertha sung or played."

"He might have spared himself that



trouble," laughed Caroline; "for young Compton and Captain Guy were both dying to talk to her, only Captain Curzon's compassion kept them away."

"You'll have a headache to-morrow," said Bertha.

"And why, pray?"

"Because you're so spiteful; you've got a great spot on your chin, and that shows how much you are out of sorts."

"Now, my dear children," said their mother, rising, "pray, don't;" and to prevent further altercation, she rang the bell.

#### IV.

A WHOLE month has passed since Margaret left Ashgate, its quiet life and simple pleasures, the home of which she is the pet and darling, and the man of whose life she is the light and star. And how do

we find her? Tempest-tossed, restless, living in a fever of excitement. What to make of Stanhope Curzon she knows not. That he loves her, she is certain; but why this mystery? Why does he not speak out openly, instead of acting his passion in despairing whispers and stolen looks? Why does he consider it necessary, while loving her alone, to pay such attention to Bertha? Somehow of late a coldness has sprung up between the cousins, and Margaret feels that her aunt too treats her more like a guest and less like a relation. If it were not for the hope and sure trust that Captain Curzon will speak, and put his love into formal words, Margaret would be glad that her looked-for visit is now drawing to an end. Poor Margaret! she so longs to exchange this feverish tumult of uncertainty for the security and rest of assured love! Why does he not speak more plainly?

What can prevent him from telling me? These are questions she asks herself twenty times in an hour. He knows that she has refused Mr. Prosser, because some one (not she) told him so. He has heard her snub Captain Guy, and has laughed to her over his discomfiture. What can it be? Not want of love? No—anything save that; and Margaret smiles, as she exultingly recalls the innumerable ways in which he has betrayed that sweet secret.

She is thinking over all this as she sits alone in the drawing-room, waiting with the hope of seeing Captain Curzon. Something he said has made her, under pretext of her cold, stay away from the Pavilion; but, though the light is almost gone, her tardy lover comes not, and Margaret, seated at the window behind one of the thick curtains, sinks into a reverie. Something suggests John Ingle, and she gives

a sigh, and wishes she had not spoken to him so unkindly. Poor Johnnie! she had never felt so sorry for him before—he had always been so good to her, so fond of her, poor fellow! It seemed very sad to love and not be loved in return, and this sent her wandering amid new hopes, conjuring back words and looks which set her fluttering heart beating quickly, until she was suddenly aroused by the opening of the door and her cousin Bertha saying—

“Nobody here? and they have not lighted the room yet.”

“Do you want lights?” asked a voice, which made her heart beat faster than before. “It is not often I get ten minutes’ happiness. Sit down, and indulge me—do—the others will be after us all too soon.”

“I expected to find Margaret,” said Bertha in a rather nervous voice. “I suppose she is in her own room.”

"Is she going to stay much longer?" asked Captain Curzon; and a something in the tone made Margaret linger in the concealment from which she was just going to emerge.

"No, I think she leaves us next week; so prepare yourself for the sad event. I know, in spite of what you say, that you are awfully smitten with her."

Captain Curzon gave a little laugh. "Very well," he said, in a resigned voice. "Have your own way. I only wish I was." And he gave a sort of smothered sigh.

"Why?" asked Bertha in a lower tone.

"Because"—and Captain Curzon evidently moved his chair a trifle nearer—"I don't think she would prove as obdurate and indifferent as some people are."

"You horridly vain man," laughed Bertha coquettishly. "I don't believe

she gives you a thought, so don't flatter yourself."

"I do not flatter myself in the least. I am perfectly certain that your fair cousin thinks no more of me than I do of her; only there is a vast difference between winning a nice good little country girl and a cruel tyrant, who knows the charm of her beauty, and uses it to torment and make a slave of the man, who she sees hasn't strength to struggle against his fate."

"I—I don't understand you."

"Don't you? I'm very glad to hear it. Hark! I thought that was your sister."

"No; we shall hear the heart-broken Prosser's manly voice," said Bertha reassuringly; for she had no wish for their *tête-à-tête* to be thus abruptly ended. "Carry is consoling him. Mamma wishes him to stay to dinner, and try his luck once more."

“With your cousin?”

“Yes. Mamma thinks it would be such a good thing for her. They’re not at all well off; and he is rich, and does not want money; and she is very pretty and lady-like.”

“Hem!” and Captain Curzon seemed to suppress a yawn as he said, “I wonder why she does not accept him? I should have fancied her one of those soft-hearted girls whom any one might have easily won.”

“Should you?” exclaimed Bertha. “Then I can tell you you are mightily mistaken. Miss Margaret has a will of her own, and a temper too.”

“Really! Pity she hasn’t more style. Fair girls want style to carry them off.”

“It’s of no use your saying that,” said Bertha; “for I am certain, in spite of everything you may say, that you admire

her. Actions speak louder than words, Captain Curzon; and when you so often contrive to walk and dance with a young lady, and ride by her side, and sit by her side whenever you can get an opportunity, *saying* you don't admire her is of very little use." And Miss Bertha's earrings quite jingled with the toss she had given her head.

"Positively, women are the most ungenerous beings in the world," said Captain Curzon, addressing an imaginary audience. "A man has just that amount of sense left him to know that, if he bores or keeps away the other admirers of the one person he is always thinking about, he will disgust her, and most probably get a summary dismissal. He therefore practises self-denial—a thing somewhat new to him—and tries to make himself agreeable to a good simple little country child—for she



is really nothing else—who, he sees, is guileless of all flirtation, and who is as ready to smile and talk to him as she would be to any other man.”

“Mr. Prosser excepted,” put in Bertha.

“Mr. Prosser has not the good fortune to wear a red coat, which is the privilege of your humble servant, and his chief charm in Miss Severn’s eyes ; since, like most novices, she suffers from a chronic state of scarlet fever. Upon my soul !” he exclaimed, jumping up suddenly with well-feigned passion. “It’s too bad, Bertha ; you’re far too clever to be blind. You see that I am on the very verge of making a fool of myself, and yet you torment me in this manner !” and he passed close to the very curtain which hid poor Margaret, who felt as though rooted to the spot. She could not disclose herself, and so proclaim that she had deceived herself, and been deceived. All her thought

was how to escape observation, how get to her own room. Suddenly there came a violent pull at the bell and the sound of voices.

"Here they are now!" exclaimed Bertha; "don't let them find us here in the dark. That little Prosser is such a gossip."

"I'll bid you good-bye, Miss Stephenson;" and Margaret knew every turn of the low, penitent voice.

"No, no!" said Bertha pleadingly; "don't go—you must not. Come downstairs with me; they have gone into the dining-room, and they need not know there are no lights here." In another moment Margaret heard Bertha's voice from below, and she rushed up-stairs, thankful above all else that she had not been discovered.

Later the same evening, when Mrs. Ste-

phenson met the guests she had asked to dinner, she said, without speaking pointedly to Mr. Prosser—

“I am so sorry that my niece is not able to join us. When we returned we found her in bed, her headache had become so much worse. I hope,” she added, as she took Colonel Smith’s arm, “it is nothing more than a cold, but one is always a little anxious when anything ails a visitor; and, though there are seven of them, her mother is so very nervous.”

The next morning Mrs. Stephenson, arrayed in her dressing-gown, went to her daughters’ room, saying—

“Don’t either of you go near Margaret; she is very feverish this morning, and I have sent for Dr. Pearce. It may be nothing, but she hasn’t had scarlet fever, she says, and she thinks her throat is a little sore.”

"Oh! I hope it is not small-pox!" said Bertha in dismay.

"Nonsense, my dear, I dare say it is but a feverish cold, only it's best to err on the safe side. I devoutly wish she was safe home, poor child."

So did the poor child herself. She was never remarkably strong, and now had sobbed and tormented herself into a fever. This, added to a very bad cold, made Dr. Pearce say that it was really impossible to tell what was the matter—she seemed excited, her pulse was too quick, and her skin hot and dry, and she complained of a headache.

"All these are grave symptoms, you know, Mrs. Stephenson, leading to anything, and sometimes to nothing, as we must hope in this case. I should not alarm myself," continued the doctor; "but, as you say your daughters are nervous

and delicate, I would keep them apart for a few days until we see how matters go."

"So, of course," added Mrs. Stephenson, when she was repeating this conversation, "I must either give up you or her; for it would be absurd keeping you away, and I going between you both."

"I don't see how we are to go anywhere without *you*, mamma; and, of course, if people don't see you they'll ask where you are, and if it gets spread about that we have illness in the house, we shall be regularly in quarantine."

"It really is very tiresome," said the mother, not wishing to deprive her daughters of enjoyment, and yet not feeling quite justified in leaving her niece to the care of a servant. "I don't want to alarm your aunt Margie, for we have no place to put her, and she'd be here before the day was out; and (if it is but a cold) in a few days

Margaret will be able to go home, and be all the better for the change. I think I'll go up and speak to her now, and explain the cause of our absence; I should not like her to think it was from unkindness."

"And don't frighten her into something, you know, mamma," called out Caroline. "I know mamma's way," she said; "she is sure to keep on telling Margaret not to frighten herself, until the poor thing will fancy she has some dreadful complaint."

In half an hour Mrs. Stephenson reappeared looking perfectly satisfied. She said that Margaret was very sensible, and said she wished to be quiet, and that Fanny would do all she should want; and she sent her love to her cousins, and hoped she should be all right in a few days—"though I very much doubt it," she added, "for her hand was so hot I could hardly hold it, and her face is very flushed. She

won't hear of my writing to her mother. She says it would frighten her so, and she is certain that it is nothing but a cold."

And so it proved. But a week elapsed before it was thought prudent for Margaret to see her cousins, leave her room, and oh ! greatest joy of all, to write to her mother to tell her that she had been ill, but was better now, and well enough to return home the following Wednesday. She should be so glad to see them all, that she did not think she should ever go away again. Mrs. Stephenson also wrote, offering that Fanny should see Margaret safely back, as she hardly thought her strong enough to travel by herself ; she wished her to stay with them longer, but she feared the poor child was a little home-sick.

Great was the commotion caused by the receipt of these two letters at Ashgate.

---

Mrs. Severn declared that, though she had not said so, she had begun to feel quite nervous about Margaret, for she had done nothing but dream of her for nights.

"I shall go for her to-morrow," she said.  
"I'd rather look after her myself."

"Of course you will," said Mr. Severn;  
"she's been doing too much with those girls of Maria's; she isn't used to be dancing and sitting up half the night. I know Maria's ways. Let us get her home, my dear. The house has been as dismal as a jail since she's been gone. I hope no one will ask any of them away again; for I like to see the children round me, especially when I'm tied by the leg as now."

## V.

By an early hour next morning Mrs. Severn was at the station waiting for the



train ; and by her side, listening patiently to all her anxious forebodings, and undertaking her numerous directions that everything should be provided for Margaret's comfort, stood John Ingle, who, as soon as he had seen Mrs. Severn safely started on her journey, walked off to Grindling to order the fly for the following day. His face was very serious as he thought of his darling lying weak and ill ; but his heart was lighter than it had been for weeks past. It was so good to feel that he was again doing things for her and her comfort ; and, when the next day he caught sight of the sweet face looking so pale, and heard her cry out, "There's Johnnie, mamma ; how glad I am to get home !" his heart gave a bound, and his face got so red that everything seemed to swim before his eyes.

Mrs. Severn had seen Dr. Pearce before leaving Brighton, and he had told her that

for some time Margaret would need great care and perfect rest. Margaret was therefore hurried to the fly at once, where, to Mrs. Severn's delight, she found everything exactly as she desired.

"Dear Johnnie!" she exclaimed in her motherly gratitude; "I can always depend upon him. I knew he'd look after everything; for poor papa has a sad turn of his gout, and cannot stir just now. Won't you come back with us, Johnnie?"

"Not to-day, Mrs. Severn; I think you'll get on now."

Margaret smiled her thanks, saying, as she pointed out some rather faded violets, "How sweet they smell! so different from those at Brighton."

John looked at the flowers in his coat. "They're those I planted for you in the frame last year," he said. "I'm glad they have done well."

That night when Margaret lay down in her own little bed, she could scarcely help crying for very happiness to think that she was again in this atmosphere of peace and love. How kind and good every one was to her! Ah! she had never thought half enough of their affection before; and, with a shudder, she recalled the suffering she had gone through during the past week. She had said little about this to her mother; for she shrank from a subject which seemed to involve the only secret she had ever in her happy life been burdened with. Fortunately, her love for Captain Curzon had been stamped out by his own words; and nothing remained to Margaret but bitter shame that she should have given a thought to a man who could laugh over the easy way in which he could beguile her. She hid her hot face in the pillow, and clenched her little hand with a desire to revenge

herself on him ; and in her dreams she was still thinking of him, talking to him, and upbraiding him, until she woke to find her mother by her side, with a large bunch of full double violets, which John Ingle had already brought for her.

When Margaret went down-stairs, her flowers in her hand, she fully expected to find John waiting, as of old, to greet her. But he had gone ; and, though not a day passed without something coming for her comfort, he resolutely stayed away until Margaret was driven to say, rather pettishly—

“Why doesn’t Johnnie come in, mamma?”

“My dear,” said Mrs. Severn, “he thought he had better not. You are very weak still, and he was afraid it might worry you.”

“What nonsense, mamma ! You must not make an invalid of me, or I shall get fretful.”

“Certainly not, dear. Shall I tell Johnnie you’d like to see him?”

“No, you need not do that; but ask him to come in as usual.”

“I have,” said Mrs. Severn; “but papa fancied you had best be kept quite quiet, and only see those you asked to see.”

“Well, then,” laughed Margaret, driven into a corner, “I ask to see Johnnie.”

During Margaret’s absence, John had confided in Mrs. Severn his determination not to worry Margaret with his suit any more, to seem to take his dismissal as final, and to avoid her as much as possible. But Margaret’s illness had somewhat upset the original scheme, though John still fought bravely against the desire he felt to go in and see the fair face which was ever before his eyes.

Gradually Margaret’s strength came back, although she looked very delicate during the

winter, and was only allowed to go to the nearest Christmas parties. When there, John (who congratulated himself greatly on getting more control over himself) never begged her to dance with him as formerly; and, by degrees, notwithstanding all the kindness he still showed her, Margaret told herself with a little sigh that at last John had evidently taken her at her word, and for the future meant them only to be friends. Perhaps it was this certainty which caused her to think so much more of him—to so often compare him with the men she had met during her Brighton visit.

Truly the world was not made up of John Ingles, and Margaret now received his thoughtful attentions far more graciously than in the days when she had laughed at him for the pains he took to win her. Anyway, by the time spring came the two were on a very different footing;

and it so happened that one afternoon, when John had seen her home from her walk, and they stood side by side in front of the still welcome fire, Margaret said suddenly—

“Why are you looking at me?”

“Because I love you.”

“Love me still!” she exclaimed in surprise, the bright colour flushing her cheeks. “Why, John, I—I thought you had quite given me up.”

And something in her tone or look made John grow exceedingly bold; and, laying his hand upon her shoulder, he turned her round towards him saying—

“No, Margaret, I shall never be able to do that. I cannot even keep silent any longer. May I—— Margaret, will you listen to me?”

“I don’t know what you are going to say,” she answered; and her tremulous

tone and downcast eyes made such a rush of triumphant delight come into John's heart, that he caught her in his arms, saying—

“Margaret! my darling! you do know! I want to tell you that I love you fifty times more than ever; and if you only think you can love me, I'll spend my life in trying to make you happy.”

And Margaret made no answer, except crying out—

“Oh, John, don't!—the children are coming, John!” And Bobby and Jim, coming in at the door, were almost tumbled one over the other by their sister's hasty retreat; while their pursuit of her was frustrated by Johnnie catching them by their jackets, and whirling them in opposite directions, as he called out, “Here, you young shavers! What have you got to say to me?”



The next day John paid a very early visit to Ashgate, and he and Margaret had not been long together before he was begging her to say that he might speak to her father. Margaret hesitated, and at last she said, with an unusually rosy face—

“John, I think it is only right that I should tell you something that happened at Brighton. I should not like us to have any secrets after, and I think you ought to know;” and in (as John thought) the sweetest, most artless way in the world, Margaret confessed to him her little tragedy.

“You don’t think the less of me, John?” she asked at its conclusion, with pretty penitence.

“Less of you, my darling! I think far more of you than I can say, for giving me this confidence. The vagabond!” he continued, “I wish I had the squaring of accounts with him for half an hour.”

“I was dreadfully angry with him for a long time,” said Margaret, “but now I can quite forgive him ;” and she put her hand into John’s, who, after he had clasped and kissed it, answered with all the fond pride of possession—

“And so can I too ; but, for all that, I should like to punch the rascal’s head.”

## SAXHAM GRANGE.

---

ON a certain Sunday morning in June, the congregation of the little church of Saxham was pervaded by an unusual spirit of scrutinising curiosity, which betrayed itself in stealthy glances and turning of heads in the direction of the pew allotted to the Grange, a large house in the neighbourhood, which had been recently taken for the summer months by Mrs. Loughborough, the wife of an Indian officer.

Saxham was a pretty, quiet village, lying some distance away from any town of importance, and dependent on the society furnished by the few houses of consequence which were within walking or easy driving

distance of one another. To such a place new-comers of any kind were objects of interest; how much more a whole family about whose excellent position and bountiful fortune a hundred reports had already been circulated! The two or three bachelors pricked up their ears when they were told that Mrs. Loughborough had a sister who was coming, Miss Cecile Stopford, while the spirits of the few young ladies around revived under the intelligence that there was also with her a cousin, a Captain Stuart Wharncliffe, who was home from India on furlough, very good-looking and very well-off. Perhaps there were thus some extenuating pleas for the rector's sermon getting such very divided attention, and for the eyes of his congregation being drawn to notice that Mrs. Loughborough was charmingly dressed, that her children looked delicate, that Miss Stopford was not nearly

so pretty as Georgey Tufnell, and that Captain Wharncliffe was as handsome as reported by Val Conyers.

The service over, the new-comers, not knowing that the habit of the Saxham gentry was to sit quietly until the last hob-nail had shuffled out, left with the rustic portion of the congregation, thus getting sufficiently ahead to enable them to make their remarks without fear of being overheard.

"A nice sermon," said Mrs. Loughborough, who, though she had but an indistinct remembrance of the text, and not an idea of the manner in which the sermon was worked out, felt it incumbent on her, as the matron, to so preface the comments which she intended to deliver. "I like the look of the rector, and his wife seems quite young. I wonder who that girl in blue was in the little side-pew with an old lady."

"Is she not pretty?" asked Cecile. "I could not take my eyes off her. Did you notice her, Stuart?"

"I just saw her, and that was all. That tall, fair young fellow's head was between us. I met him in the village last evening."

"I should think they'll all call upon us," said Mrs. Loughborough.

And call they did, so that by the next Sunday the Grange people were recognised by the whole of Saxham as part and parcel of the community, and before a month had passed these persons thus introduced had seen more of each other, and were more intimate together, than if they had lived as neighbours in London all their lives. They walked, rode, drove, met at each other's houses to play croquet and archery, got up picnics, and mutually strove to contrive that the summer days should pass swiftly and pleasantly. They really knew very

little more about each other than they did on that Sunday when they first met, saying that the good opinions then formed had been more than confirmed, and all Saxham had united in saying that Mrs. Loughborough was charming—and so good-natured; that Miss Stopford, though not a beauty, was exceedingly clever—and so very amiable; the marvel being that there should have been no warmer feeling between her and Captain Wharnccliffe than the brotherly attachment which was evident in his manner towards her. But then, no doubt, such a handsome man had been spoiled, and was looking out for a lady of title at the very least. It was also wondered at that the gallant soldier did not seem more struck with Georgey Tufnell, or it might have gone hard with Val Conyers, who was only waiting to own Priors to lay it at the feet of the Saxham belle. Others besides the

feminine gossips of the village wondered over Captain Wharncliffe's indifference to Georgey's charms. Val Conyers sighed his thankfulness twenty times in the day, Cecile Stopford's spirits rose every time she saw them together, and Mrs. Loughborough kissed and embraced Georgey with fervent gratitude because there had been no realisation of the fears which assailed her the first time she had thoroughly seen the bewitching little coquette.

But perhaps all this demands a little explanation—and the reason was this: Stuart Wharncliffe and the ladies at the Grange were in reality not related to each other; but they had an uncle who at his death divided his ample fortune between his favourite niece, Cecile Stopford, and his favourite nephew, Stuart Wharncliffe, with the proviso that they must, on pain of forfeiting the bequest, marry each other.



They were not obliged to decide until Cecile was twenty-five, and then, if either objected to this arrangement, one must lose his or her portion of the inheritance. It was the only hard thing the kind but eccentric old man had ever done, and Stuart resented it exceedingly. Whenever it was mentioned to him, he worked himself into a towering passion, said that his uncle was an old fool, that he was in his dotage, that his brain must have been affected—ending with a confession that of course he must marry Cecile; he could not drag out another ten years in a place that he hated, and in a climate that was killing him; and of course her friends would object to her giving up the money, which, he maintained, as a woman she ought not to be allowed to do.

Cecile, on her part, inwardly showed considerable temper about an arrangement which she declared would be certain to

make them detest each other ; and when she was alone she would vehemently bewail her unlucky fate.

“Cornelius Luttrell,” she would say, “you stupid, blind old bachelor, you ought to have been pilloried before you were permitted to make a will that ties me round Stuart’s neck like a log. Of course he won’t like me now ; and we used to be so different to each other before. Now I am ashamed to be commonly civil to him for fear he should think I want to force him into marrying me.”

“If you were only commonly decent looking,” she would say, apostrophizing her reflection in the glass, “there would be hope for you, but you are not ; you’re plain, you know you are. Your eyes are like two currants, stuck in a face the colour of a saffron cake ; your nose is as fat as a lamb’s tail—oh ! you fright ! How is a

man like him to be in love with you? But he shall never know I care for him, and, if I see him trying to swallow me like a pill, he shall have all the money, and I'll say I hate him!" which pitiful climax to her woes would invariably reduce Miss Stopford to tears.

It may be naturally and justly concluded from this that she was not a beauty, and she certainly was nothing of the kind. To rob her self-description of its metaphors, her eyes were small, her mouth large, her complexion pale, and her nose inclined to be thick and long. Still, she had her attractions, and she had her admirers, who ignored her bad features, and saw only her well-shaped head, luxuriant brown hair, perfect figure and good carriage—things on which Cecile set but small store; for she was the plain one, among a remarkably handsome and delicately featured family—

people who thought that if girls had not straight little noses, big eyes, and perfect skins, they were to be primarily regarded as an outward horror to men and an inward satisfaction to women. Cecile had grown up with the consciousness that all her relations were groaning over her want of beauty, which would be at times delicately alluded to by some aunt or cousin pleasantly remarking, that Cecy's nose didn't get smaller; and it was generally believed that her original devotion to Stuart Wharncliffe arose from his saying he thought her a very nice-looking girl, and he admired her more than her simpering cousin, Amy Rochford.

Stuart Wharncliffe had always been regarded as Mr. Luttrell's heir; the other members of his family had only anticipated legacies. Everybody was thus quite taken aback by the luck which had fallen to

Cecile, which they were the sooner reconciled to because, poor girl, she wanted something to get her off, and she would be sure to get married when the conditions of the will were known. There was a great deal of laughter at Stuart's expense. It was considered too bad that he should be obliged to marry that plain girl, although since his return home he had paid as much or more attention to her than to any one else. But then every one knew that he did not mean anything, which was quite true; although it was equally true that Captain Wharncliffe liked Cecile better than any of the girls he knew. Still, he certainly was not in love with her, nor did he suppose that she was in love with him. He knew that Cecile's face and manner always gave him a welcome, but, not being troubled with an excess of vanity, if he thought about it at all, it was only to

think that they liked each other, and found it easy to get on together, which was a great charm, for Stuart was excessively lazy, and he felt it a decided boon to be with a companion who took upon herself the onus of providing topics for conversation.

There is no knowing to what results this pleasant intimacy might have led had not their easy footing been suddenly and rudely disturbed by the knowledge that they were expected to care for each other—that to do so was to each of them a duty almost amounting to an obligation, the policy of which their mutual friends flaunted before their eyes with an effect similar to that produced by scarlet banners upon half-maddened bulls. Privileged and meddling relations were constantly begging them not to fly in the face of Providence, and asking what reasons they had for

objecting to marry each other, until Stuart, who had not thought of giving up his claim to the money, rather than which he would have married a dozen Ceciles, felt that some step must be taken. He therefore wrote to Cecile, saying that by the conditions of the will they were both most awkwardly placed, and he had felt that for the last six months a coldness and embarrassment had sprung up between them which had not formerly existed ; and then, after an allusion to their past friendship, and a delicate suggestion that it was very desirable that a warmer feeling should be engendered between them, he proposed as the most likely way to effect this, that till the end of the second year (when the decision must be made) they should try and forget the conditions of Uncle Luttrell's will, which should not be mentioned by them, or by any one to them, and that

they would renew their old intimacy without prejudice of any kind. Cecile's answer to this was that the next time she and Stuart were alone (which was always ostentatiously contrived), she jumped up, and, holding out both her hands, said in a very tearfully glad voice—

“I am so glad, Stuart, that now we shall be our old selves again ;” and though there was no absolute necessity for the kiss of peace Stuart bestowed upon Cecile's glowing face, he evidently thought that there was, and he held her in rather a lover-like fashion, as he called her a silly little goose for crying, and assured her that all would come right. And after this such an evident change for the better took place that the family, though silent to the principal actors, talked confidentially to each other and called the matter settled; so that it was prophesied if Mrs. Loughborough could but



get them both down to Saxham quietly together, they would without doubt be married before the year was out. Cecile allowed herself to indulge in renewed hope, and counted not a little on the romantic situations and pastoral charms of the country, which were greatly strengthened when her sister told her that Stuart had begged that she would not ask anybody else, but let them really be alone together.

“I am sure I shall manage it all,” thought Mrs. Loughborough, “for of course, in a place like this, where he is not likely to see any one, he’ll forget that Cecile is so plain, and, once forgotten, men never seem to remember it against a girl they have learnt to care for.”

It was no wonder, therefore, that she was greatly discomfited by sight of Georgey Tufnell, who was without question a beauty calculated to drive the greater portion of

mankind to a state of hopeless infatuation. Captain Wharncliffe expressed his admiration of her quite openly, and Cecile, who was not given to jealous detraction of gifts which she did not possess, warmly responded to his praise; for her own happiness seemed almost within her grasp, and her heart beat with joy every time she recalled the words Stuart had said the evening before as they walked home.

"Cissy, I have taken quite a fancy to this place; how would you like to live here?"

Live there! Why where, in what dreary desert, would she not have lived with him? while without him the bluest skies would have looked leaden and the sunniest climes gloomy.

"I think it is a lovely little village, and the people are all so nice," answered Cecile enthusiastically, "that I should be quite happy to stay here always."

“I’m glad of that. The Grange might be made a jolly house with a little alteration. I wonder whether these Kimberleys would sell it;” and after this Cecile lingered lovingly over every nook and cranny of their new abode, wondering within her whether it would be the scene of a joy the faintest prospect of which opened long vistas of happiness, whose rosy end was too dazzling and far off for her eyes now to penetrate.

Cecile’s great favourite in Saxham was Mr. Conyers, or, as he was universally called, Val Conyers. There seemed to be a chord of sympathy between them. Val was big, and fair, and plain, and was most devotedly in love with beautiful Georgey Tufnell, who, though she certainly accepted all his homage, hardly seemed to appreciate it. She took it for granted that Val was her devoted slave, and therefore his place

was to look equally amiable whether she caressed or cuffed him, to either of which, in her sauciness, she readily treated him, affording much amusement to Mrs. Loughborough, who regarded her as the most artless, lovely creature she had ever seen—a perfect child in thought and feeling. Cecile admired her, but fancied she hardly showed sufficient consideration to Val, and spoke of her as a little spoilt.

Stuart Wharncliffe, after the first week or so, held his tongue, and apparently turned a deaf ear to these discussions; and, having seemingly lost his admiration for his fair neighbour whom he all but avoided, Mrs. Loughborough declared to Stuart she must scold him for taking so little notice of Georgey as he had lately done.

“Don’t you like her, Stuart?” she asked, for from being at first dreadfully alarmed that he would like Georgey too much, she

was now dreadfully disappointed that he did not like her enough.

"Like her!" echoed Captain Wharncliffe, "why should I not like her?"

"I cannot conceive how you can help falling desperately in love with her," laughed Mrs. Loughborough, lowering her voice, so as to prevent her words reaching her sister, who was romping with the children outside. "To me she is simply bewitching, and so naïve. Do you know she told me as frankly as a child that you were just the sort of man she could fall in love with, and that——"

"Confound the dog," exclaimed Stuart, suddenly dividing the contents of his cup between his trousers and the carpet.

"I like that," called out Cecile from the garden; "why Bounce is out here, you clumsy old thing;" and this awkward interruption, and the disquisition it drew

forth from Mrs. Loughborough on accidents to carpets generally, and to the carpets of furnished houses in particular, prevented Captain Wharncliffe hearing Miss Tufnell's flattering remarks, which Mrs. Loughborough, now she saw that she could tell him with impunity, was very fond of repeating. Moreover, she rather studied to amuse him, because he had been more silent of late than was usual with him—low-spirited she fancied—though Cecile laughed at the idea, and Stuart got quite cross at the bare suggestion.

"I'm going for a turn, Cissy," Captain Wharncliffe called out about an hour after breakfast.

Cecile would have volunteered her company, but he had already turned down the road, and thinking perhaps he would rather be alone, she allowed him to proceed by himself.

Captain Wharncliffe seemed somewhat irresolute about which path he would take ; he leaned on a stile for a few minutes, then he turned and continued his way on the road for a short distance, suddenly he altered his mind, retraced his steps, jumped over the stile, and across the fields to the river along whose narrow banks ran a pathway, rugged and uneven from the spreading roots of the trees which gave shelter overhead. It was one of the prettiest walks in Saxham ; and the most picturesque part was the Ford, close to which stood a well-built cottage, the residence of Mrs. Grant and her niece, Georgey Tufnell.

Stuart Wharncliffe knew the way well, for by some strange coincidence Val Conyers always strove to demonstrate that the nearest way to wherever he might be going was past the Ford, and many a time Miss Georgey, safely screened from view,

had watched the two men before and after they had passed the house—Val's face turned towards the windows, his eager eyes scanning every one, Stuart's dark head bent a little, his eyes averted, his face clouded.

Stuart Wharnccliffe completely puzzled Georgey, because she was not quite sure how he regarded her. She saw that he avoided her, but the avoidance was too marked for indifference. Besides which, there had been a something two or three times in his manner, which made her suspect that this guarded politeness only covered a feeling deeper than the open admiration she generally inspired. And as Mrs. Loughborough had been unable to resist whispering in her ear that Captain Wharnccliffe and Cecile were joint heirs to a rich uncle, who had left them the equal possessors of large fortunes, Georgey was



more anxious than she had ever before been to render her tactics perfect.

To have plenty of money to spend in the adornment of her lovely little person was her chief ambition ; to be placed in a position where she would find a fresh host of admirers was her highest aim ; and she thought that if she could but subdue Captain Wharncliffe she should secure both of these object. With such prizes at stake, it behoved her to act with great caution, because she saw that for some reason, not evident, it was plain that Captain Wharncliffe did not desire that he should succumb to the influence of her charms. What could the reason be ? Had that stupid Val been talking to him ? Georgey had no compunction in throwing over "that stupid Val," though for the last two years she had told him that she cared for him far more than for any one else. Well, so she did

generally ; for was not Val the best match round Saxham, and one day he would be owner of Priors, and very well off? But that might not be for years, and Georgey wanted her triumphs to commence at once. Besides, she felt that Saxham was too small a field for her ambition. There and for miles around her position was securely established, and nobody dreamed of wresting the palm of beauty from her. When she first heard of Miss Stopford's advent, she had been filled with excitement to learn whether she should find in her a rival, but her first glimpse at Cecile set all her fears at rest on that point, and gave rise to hopes that in Captain Wharncliffe she saw the fulfilment of her brightest dreams.

If love had been a possibility to Georgey, she would have fallen in love with the only man who had ever raised her curiosity or piqued her pride by his indifference, and

certainly the first time her quick eye noted a trifling betrayal in his manner her vain little heart beat quick with delight and a suspicion that after all his coldness was but assumed. But why, if he was rich and independent, should he not show her his admiration? It was evident that he was not in love with Cecile, though, woman-like, she was not long in discovering that Cecile was anything but indifferent to him ; and over the discovery Georgey gave a little laugh and said to herself that Cecile and Val could console each other. On further reflection this arrangement seemed so satisfactory to them both that she quite plumed herself on the generosity which had led her to contemplate its accomplishment, though 'twas to be by an act which would reduce each to despair and Val to a state of hopeless affection which he must never get over. The first important thing

was that Georgey should be perfectly assured of the state of Captain Wharncliffe's feelings towards her, and almost every hour of the day she thought over this and wished she could see inside his heart.

Supposing that her wish could have been granted, what then? Would she have been satisfied? In one way, perfectly; for if ever a man was desperately in love that man was Stuart Wharncliffe, and the more he strove to overcome his passion the more entirely it seemed to get the mastery over him. The arrow had hit him the first day he met Georgey. As, however, his new resolutions about Cecile were then fresh, he shut his eyes to his temptation, which gained strength until, just as he was beginning to ask himself if he should be able to sustain the war of love against prudence in face of so fair an enemy, Val Conyers, in a burst of confidence en-

gendered by the fellowship and intimacy of a fishing expedition, when there was little sport, and the pleasantest thing was to lie under the trees and gossip of what came uppermost in one's mind, confided to him his own prospects—how his grandfather would not let him do anything but wait to step into his vacant shoes, which, but for one thing, he was not anxious to do.

“And that one thing?” asked Captain Wharncliffe, with an uneasy suspicion of the truth.

Val on this told him bit by bit how they had known each other for years, and how he had always been awfully smitten, but Georgey, though she did not say yes, would not say no; and that he used to be in a dreadful state, fearing she did not like him.

“And are you easier now?” asked Stuart indifferently.

Val blushed like a school-girl.

“Well, yes,” he stammered out. “I used to be so jealous; but since last summer I’ve got over that, you know. All these pretty girls are alike. However much they care for a fellow, they can’t resist teasing him; but she does not mean anything—at least, she always says so.”

“Then you consider yourself engaged to her?” said Stuart, feeling a rising dislike towards his ingenuous companion, mixed with a wholesome feeling of indignant contempt.

“I—why, I never gave any other girl a thought, not in that way. Of course, it is not a regular proper affair, because she won’t let me speak of it to people generally; but her aunt knows, and, for that matter, so does every one else—only, she likes to think they don’t. Girls are awfully queer that way, don’t you think so?”

“Some are, certainly; but I’ve been in India, at rather a bad station, so my experience of ladies, except my own cousins, is limited.”

“Ah, well, if they’re all like Miss Stopford, you’re lucky, I can tell you. Now, she is what I call a nice girl; she never seems up to any nonsense with fellows. I wish you and she liked each other.”

Then, finding Captain Wharncliffe made no answer, Val’s face got very red again, and he said—

“I hope you won’t be offended with anything I say. You know, I live so much without meeting people, that I forget sometimes that I don’t know you so well as I do those I see every day. You’ll tell me, though, if I ever say anything you don’t like about Miss Stopford. She said she should like to live here, and if you were both here always wouldn’t we have jolly

times, hunting and shooting; for I mean to preserve the game and weed the stables well when my turn comes. My grandfather is too old, and does not care for it, and the Kimberleys living abroad, it makes the place terribly dull in winter. At least, I don't mind it; but Georgey feels it. You see, I can go there whenever I like, but she has no one near."

"But she has you."

Val laughed.

"Oh, I am not much," he said. "Besides, somehow, I can't talk to her as I can to you. You and Miss Stopford and Mrs. Loughborough have been so kind to me, I seem to be quite at home with you all."

"That's right," Stuart replied more heartily, for the evil spirit was waxing weaker, and he had begun to ask himself what the boy had done to harm him, or what cause he had to be angry because



he had done what he believed every man living must do—fall in love with Georgey's distracting beauty. And if no Cecile stood in the way, would it be honourable in him to try and win her who had been already won. Yes, but how won? just because she had seen no one else, did not know that her childlike loveliness might secure any one. This poor fellow, good-hearted and honourable as he was, was no more fit to have such a jewel in his keeping than he was to guard a crown; and Stuart sighed over the inscrutable ways of fate, and said that there was no more chance of sport, and that he thought they had best go back. No, not by the Ford. Was there not some other path? and Val, scarce hiding his disappointment, admitted there was, but it would not make much difference in time, and it was not at all pretty. Still Captain Wharncliffe pre-

ferred it to again going past the Ford Cottage.

More than a month had elapsed since that afternoon's gossip with Val. Stuart Wharncliffe had done his best to drive the new intruder from the stronghold in which she had entrenched herself. After he had reasoned with himself, he decided that he had now compromised Cecile too completely to draw back from the tacit engagement which seemed to exist between them. Besides, he saw that there was an understanding with Val and Georgey—indeed Georgey admitted as much to Mrs. Loughborough, adding, what Mrs. Loughborough repeated in proof of her wondrous simplicity, that she only felt towards Val as she would to a brother, but he had teased her so, and Aunt Eliza had so persuaded her, that at last she was obliged to say Yes to him. It was no wonder that Stuart held

himself silent during these revelations of confidences, which made every pulse thrill and beat until he was obliged to try and divert attention by knocking over a flower-pot, and upsetting a vase, stepping on poor Bounce, or any other original idea which entailed plenty of noise and confusion.

Until a few days past no dawning of suspicion had crossed Cecile's mind that it mattered in the least to Stuart whether Miss Tufnell did or did not exist. Some trifling circumstance first aroused her wonder; then she began to note his marked avoidance of her, coupled with a sort of dog-in-the-manger determination that Val should not be left to pay attentions which he never offered. During all this time Georgey's studied blindness to the fact that Stuart was every now and then almost rude to her made Cecile feel uneasy, and remember a dozen things which, in her

confidence, she had allowed to pass unnoticed. A rose which at the time it fell struck her as one she had seen Georgey wearing, although she was satisfied when Stuart said, "Oh, one of the children stuffed it in there." She now felt certain it was Georgey's flower. She believed it was, and that she had given it to him ; but there Cecile misjudged her. True, it was Val that had given Georgey the rose, but after wearing it an hour, and pretending to think herself unobserved, she had contemptuously thrown it away. Unable to resist the temptation, Stuart had completed her triumph by picking up the poor flower, and thrusting it out of sight. This was the most open demonstration he had ever made, and it satisfied Georgey ; so that when, by the fitful light of the moon, she saw a figure watching her clematis-smothered window, her heart gave a great bound of joy, and

she felt sure that it was not Val Conyers who stood so patient and resolutely screened from view.

Captain Wharncliffe sought to excuse his silence and desire to be alone under the plea of rheumatism, which he declared had found its way to his head, and Cecile never seemed to doubt his assertions. Indeed she verified them by thinking that, perhaps, there was something in the weather, for her head ached so that she could hardly speak. In consequence she kept in her room more than usual.

"It may be all my fancy," thought Cecile, "but as I have taken it into my head, I had best satisfy myself, for I cannot help suspecting that Miss Georgey is not quite as innocent as Fanny believes her to be."

Three or four days passed by before the whole party met together again, and Cecile

saw that some great change had taken place. There was a visible embarrassment in Georgey's manner to Stuart, while he, usually so indolent, and hard to stir into activity, seemed never to be for five minutes in the same place. He was nervous, irritable, and quite unable to rest anywhere. Then Val sat silent and moody, casting uneasy glances at Georgey, who took no more notice of him than if he were not there. Mrs. Loughborough tried to make things flow agreeably, but it was of no use. Everybody seemed to be suffering from some internal excitement, which did not interfere with Stuart's handsome face, and only heightened Georgey's rosy colour, while poor Val looked stupid and heavy, and Cecile's cheeks grew pale as her nose got red, and swelled, she declared, to the size of a soda-water bottle; "and then that spiteful little wretch must

come and lean over me," thought Cecile, recalling the scene, "and I saw Stuart look at us, and turn away with a shudder at the contrast. Oh! why *am* I so ugly, and what can it all mean?"

Cecile was not left long in doubt, for one day, having excused herself from driving with her sister, who should suddenly disturb her solitude but Val, looking so haggard and woebegone that Cecile saw, although he stoutly denied that anything was the matter, that something had gone terribly wrong with him. By degrees he confided to her the cause of his misery. He had begun of late to suspect that Captain Wharncliffe was not so utterly indifferent to Georgey as he pretended; and jealousy prompting him to watch him, he had discovered enough to make him miserable. But not until that morning had all his hopes been crushed, by going down

---

to the cottage and there finding Georgey and Captain Wharncliffe together.

"Stuart!" exclaimed Cecile; "impossible! Why he left at ten o'clock to go to Winchester. He wanted to go to the bank there, and I walked as far as Aston with him; he would walk to the station."

"Well, he must have turned back then," said Val; "for at twelve o'clock I went to the Ford, and got over a place at the back, which Aunt Eliza lets me do, and in the little summer-room in the garden I saw them together. I know I ought not to have stayed," continued Val, his face crimson; "but, oh! Miss Stopford, you cannot tell what I felt; I could have killed him. You don't know what jealousy is; I felt I must listen."

"And what did you hear?" asked Cecile, not looking up.

"Oh, a great deal which I cannot re-



peat; only he told her that he was wretched—that he loved her so madly that he could no longer conceal it from her, and yet he felt he was acting wrongly towards me. And then he said something about his being bound to some one else. I don't know who he meant; neither could Georgey find out, though she tried—he would not tell her. I suppose you know who it is, Miss Stopford?" Then, after a pause, he asked, "You don't think she is likely to give him up, do you?"

"Which *she* do you mean?" said Cecile, still apparently engrossed in crimping the lace frilling of her little muslin apron.

"The young lady. Oh! not Georgey," he frankly added. "I know, if he is not well off—and he said as much—if he only went away, Georgey would very soon forget him. That's what makes it so hard, Miss Stopford, because I know that all the

---

while she cares for me, and if I'd only got Priors she'd have me to-morrow."

As Val finished his lamentation Cecile raised her head. "Fate seems rather hard upon some of us, Mr. Conyers," she said, and the tone made Val turn so that their eyes met.

"Oh, Miss Stopford!" he exclaimed; "what have I done? I never thought it could be. You know, don't you, that I would suffer anything rather than give you pain? What an unlucky idiot I am; always saying or doing the wrong thing!"

"You have done nothing wrong this time," said Cecile kindly, "only"—strive against it as she would, her face got scarlet—"you must not take fancies into your head. I don't mind telling you that I do know the young lady to whom probably Captain Wharncliffe alluded, and I know also that her great wish is to see him

happy—which he is not very likely to be,” she added bitterly, “with a young lady who is given to forget people in a few weeks.”

“Perhaps I ought not to say that of her, Miss Stopford; but you see——”

“I perfectly understand,” interrupted Cecile. “I don’t think myself that Miss Tufnell is likely to break her heart after an absent admirer. Indeed, it would be a pity that she should, she is far too pretty to go wasting in despair.”

“I wish she was not half as pretty,” sighed Val dismally. “I should care for her just as much, and perhaps other people would not. I cannot understand Captain Wharncliffe. I don’t think he is behaving well—not quite honourably, you know, Miss Stopford.”

“I cannot see that,” said Cecile shortly. “You know best whether Miss Tufnell is

---

right to listen; but as for Captain Wharncliffe, he has every right to say what he pleases to any young lady, and, as to being dishonourable, on the contrary, he has an over-strained notion of honour."

"Of course you know best, Miss Stopford; and you won't take any notice of what I say—will you? for I really feel as if I did not know what to do, and I can't see how anything is ever to get right again."

"I fancy the best thing is to try and wait patiently, or, at all events, silently, until you see what course matters will take. Suppose you concealed from Miss Tufnell this knowledge you unwittingly became possessed of, and leave her to speak about it."

"Do you think that would be best?"

"I do—at least, I can think of nothing better; and, if you feel certain that Miss

Tufnell's preference for Captain Wharncliffe is in some measure due to her idea that he is a rich man, you need not despair, Mr. Conyers; your case is far from a hopeless one."

Cecile held out her hand as she said this, and Val saw she intended him to take his departure; so, thanking her for her kindness, and repeating over and over again his well-meant but blundering apologies, he said good-bye, and poor Cecile was left to herself.

"I hate that girl," she thought; "I strove against it, but from the first I knew she was a vain, deceitful little wretch, with a heart too small to fill a nutshell; and to think that such as she should win love, and—and Stuart's love too! I'm not jealous, and she may turn the heads of the whole male creation for aught I care, but she shan't deceive Stuart, and marry

him because she thinks he's got money. If she loved him I could be happy"—in token of which Cecile sobbed violently—"leave them all the money, and die happily;" and here grief for her untimely fate made her break down altogether and give way to a flood of tears, at the exhaustion of which she 'looked up, and nodding her head in a fashion very far removed from mild resignation, she addressed a feathery shrub near with "he shall just see what you're made of, and how much your love is worth, and, until then, I won't hint at giving up a farthing. I don't want the money, and I'd go to the North Pole with him on the top of a baggage-waggon, and he knows it, and he'd best see if you're willing to give up anything."

During the next few days Mrs. Loughborough did nothing but ask each person what ailed each other person. Captain

Wharncliffe was moody and silent; Cecile was so variable and restless that she never seemed to remain two minutes in the same mind or in the same place; Val Conyers had quite deserted them; and a note from Georgey Tufnell said she was too unwell to be able to keep the appointments she had previously made. "Everything seems going wrong," sighed Mrs. Loughborough, who had just been telling Captain Wharncliffe that she felt certain it was the weather that was making all of them feel so depressed. "Now do be advised by me, Stuart, and put off going to London for another week; your business cannot be so very important that it will not stand over for a few days."

But Captain Wharncliffe was resolute, saying that he ought to be in town at that very moment, and he could not delay his departure beyond the next day.

---

“You know you must return before the 26th because of the picnic. I cannot manage without you there.”

“My business will be settled long before that,” said Stuart; an answer which satisfied Mrs. Loughborough, and put a stop to any further opposition.

Since the morning when he had declared his mad passion for Georgey, Captain Wharncliffe’s state of mind had been anything but an enviable one. Each hour he had come to a fresh decision. Sometimes his resolve was to leave Saxham without seeing Georgey again; then he would determine upon having a final interview, and explaining more fully his difficult position. He was still halting between these various plans when he left the Grange under pretence of going down to the village to make some inquiry about the train, but, upon reaching a bend in



the river, from which Ford Cottage was visible, his prudent resolutions took flight, and without waiting for further reflection, he soon found himself in the pretty morning-room waiting for Georgey, who declared she had never expected to see him again, and had made herself quite ill with crying over their parting. Stuart saw that she was pale, and her eyes looked heavy and tearful. Altogether she was more irresistible to him than ever ; and forgetting all his resolves to be silent, at least, until he had talked with Cecile, he poured forth his love anew, and ended by telling her that he knew, the moment he hinted at another attachment, the lady of whom he had spoken would instantly release him.

“But would you be able to keep your share of the money?” murmured Georgey, after she had evinced a becoming amount of pleasure.

A shadow of distrust fell upon Stuart Wharnccliffe's happiness, and he answered quickly, "No, Georgey; and what I want to ask you is this—can you take me as a poor soldier, with nothing more than my pay? You would have to live out of the world, with little or no society beyond what we might prove to each other."

"But if you manage, I don't see how she could keep all the fortune. You said she was such a very generous person."

"There are different kinds of generosity," Stuart said, and the expression of his face changed. "I cannot, neither is there any need to, explain all the circumstances; but for our purpose just now it is enough to know that what I am stating are the facts, and only if your love is strong enough to enable you to dispense with that money must you accept me."

“I’m so afraid of Aunt Eliza,” said Georgey; “she would never let me go to India.”

“But I thought you told me yesterday that you always have your own way.”

“Yes, so I have; but, of course, I could not displease her, or do anything she did not like.”

“I might exchange, so as to get into a regiment on home service,” said Stuart half to himself; “but remember,” he added in a louder tone, “that would only make me worse off. My income would then be smaller.”

“Aunt was very angry at your coming here the other day,” said Georgey, ignoring the last question. “Of course,” she added, feigning great confusion, “I could not tell her how much I liked you, and she said it was wrong to Val, and—and—perhaps it was; for I have been miserable ever since I

thought about what you said that sometimes we were forced to sacrifice ourselves."

Stuart felt his back and his manner stiffening with each word that fell from those rosy lips. If the inner voice within him could have spoken aloud, it would have said, "Stuart Wharncliffe, you have made a fool of yourself, and been made a fool of by a girl who has no more love for you than you have shown towards the woman whose very name you are not worthy to utter."

"We need not prolong this interview," said Captain Wharncliffe, after a moment's pause; "it is evident that we have both been mistaken, and it now only remains for me to apologise to you for intruding so early, and to your aunt for intruding at all, and to assure you that I shall not again transgress the rules of society in the same manner."

“I’m sure you don’t understand me,” sobbed Georgey, her tears readily flowing with disappointment and vexation; “and you are going away angry, which is so unkind. I’m sure I do not know what to do. I can’t marry two people, and Val thinks I am very fond of him, and perhaps he might do something dreadful when he knew that I liked you better.”

“I beg you will not reduce him to a state of despondency on my account.”

“Perhaps we had best say nothing about it,” stammered Georgey; “it is so awkward when people know things.”

-Stuart felt he hated her. “That rests with you,” he said; “if it is any satisfaction to you, as far as Mr. Conyers goes, you are quite safe. Our interviews will certainly not be mentioned to him by me. I hear footsteps,” he went on; “it may be your aunt. I have no wish to meet her; so

allow me to wish you good-morning;" and, heedless of the despairing attitude into which Georgey immediately threw herself, he stepped out of the French window, and, before she looked up, was walking rapidly down the garden-path. Georgey watched him for a minute, and then, with a toss of her head, she exclaimed—

"And I'm very glad you're gone, for I don't like you half as well as Val."

If ever a man felt himself suddenly possessed by devils, it was Stuart Wharncliffe. He called himself all the fools he could possibly think of. To be duped by a girl who was fifty times more crafty and designing than those London belles, whose every artifice he considered himself perfectly secure against! To fancy that, valuing ease and comfort and money as he did, he should have been willing to give them all up for this heartless little coquette!

who was at that very time engaged in pacifying the injured accusations and reproaches of her old lover. But Val could not keep up his indignation long after Georgey had begged forgiveness and given him her own version of the affair—how, though Captain Wharncliffe had begged her, not an hour ago, to accept him, she had said No, because her heart had gone back to Val; and Val, knowing nothing of the conditions of the offer, and, for fear of betraying Cecile, not daring to hint at anything of the kind, believed her, and wrote the best letter he could to Cecile, telling her that he had made a great mistake in some way—that Georgey still loved him and considered herself still engaged to him; and thereupon Cecile sat down and began a long letter to Stuart, telling him that she wished him to understand that she found it impossible to fulfil the conditions of

---

their uncle's will, and that she therefore withdrew her claim to any portion of the money—but, before the letter came to a conclusion, there was a tap at the door, and, to Cecile's confusion, Captain Wharncliffe asked if she would spare him ten minutes, as he wished to speak to her alone.

For nearly an hour these two people fenced with each other, said the most cutting things, and told the most improbable stories, then, mutually indignant, Captain Wharncliffe rose to leave, and suddenly, somehow, their masks fell off, and in the next five minutes Stuart had told Cecile the real story of his humiliation, and she had repeated a great deal of what Val had said, and her reasons for not setting him free before.

"It was not jealousy, Stuart," sobbed Cecile; "but, though I intended her to have every farthing of Uncle Luttrell's



fortune, I could not let you be married to any one who cared for anything but you."

And so it turned out that these two, who declared they could never be lovers, parted, swearing eternal friendship. Captain Wharncliffe left for London, and a week after Cecile accepted an invitation to go to Norfolk, where, before long, a letter reached her from Stuart, who was preparing to set off for Norway. This letter gave Cecile more mingled joy and sorrow than she had ever had in her life. She read and re-read it day by day, until she and Stuart saw each other again, which was not for nearly eighteen months, and then they were obliged to meet to legally settle this question of the will. Colonel Loughborough, Cecile's brother-in-law, who was left guardian, had come to England, and Stuart Wharncliffe's leave of absence had nearly expired. All their

friends were furious, because each maintained the other was to have the money, and steadily refused it.

"The only conclusion to which I can come," said Colonel Loughborough, after listening to each story, "is that you had best both give up the money. You can do so, as there is a codicil which provides for that decision."

"Very well, so we will;" and so they did, and a very nice life their disgusted relatives led them after it, until it became rather more than Cecile could bear; so she announced her intention of going off to grandmamma, who wouldn't have the heart to be cross to her, for, in spite of her forced spirits, she was getting thinner and paler every day. Stuart was quite grieved to see her when he came to take his leave, although he did not look much better.

Colonel Loughborough, who was thought

to be rather too lenient to Cecile, had arranged this leave-taking, and that it should take place on a day when everybody but himself was out.

How long Stuart had been there he did not know, for when at length they came into the room he had forgotten all about them. "Hulloa," he exclaimed, suddenly becoming alive to the very affectionate attitude in which they were standing.

"Yes; it's all right." Stuart laughed, his handsome face beaming with delight. "She is not going away except with me."

"Why, what am I to understand?"

"That we could part with the money, but we can't part with each other; and Cissy says she'll go to India with me."

"Yes, it's quite true, Robert;" and, throwing her arms round Colonel Loughborough's neck, she sobbed, "I am so happy."

Colonel Loughborough waited for a moment, and then he said, "Ah! it's very romantic, and I feel it's dreadful to upset it all; but I'm afraid I must; for the conditions of the codicil are that no matter how you both may finally decide, the money remains equally yours."

THE END.



# POPULAR WORKS.

*In neat bindings, 3s. 6d. each.*

---

## Studies for Stories.

By JEAN INGELOW. With Illustrations by MILLAIS and others.

## A Sister's Bye-Hours.

By JEAN INGELOW. With Frontispiece.

## Mopsa the Fairy.

By JEAN INGELOW. With Illustrations.

## The Old Lieutenant and his Son.

By the late NORMAN MACLEOD, D.D. With Illustrations by MAHONEY.

## Iona.

By the Duke of ARGYLL. With Illustrations.

## Dreamthorp.

A Book of Essays written in the Country. By the late ALEXANDER SMITH.

## Life in the Woods.

A Story of Canadian Bush Life. By CUNNINGHAM GRINKIE, D.D. With Illustrations.

## The Story of Dick Whittington,

the Famous Lord Mayor of London. By JOHN B. MARSH. With Illustrations.

## The Near and the Heavenly Horizons.

By the Countess de GASPARIN.

## The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.

By OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES. With Illustrations by J. GORDON THOMSON.

## The Regular Swiss Round.

In Three Trips. By the Rev. HARRY JONES, M.A. With Illustrations by WHYMFER.

## Notes on England.

By H. TAINE, D.C.L. Translated by W. F. RAE. With an Introduction by the Translator.

---

DALDY, ISBISTER, & CO., 56, LUDGATE HILL.

# POPULAR WORKS.

*In neat bindings, 6s. each.*

## Town Geology.

By the Rev. CHARLES KINGSLEY.

## Madam How and Lady Why;

or, First Lessons in Earth Lore for Children. By the Rev. CHARLES KINGSLEY. With Illustrations.

## Golden Lives.

Biographies for the Day. By H. A. PAGE. With Portraits.

## Out and all About.

Fables for Old and Young. By H. A. PAGE. With 85 Illustrations.

## My Mother and I.

By the Author of "John Halifax." With Illustrations by J. McL. HALSTON.

## Pet;

or, Pastimes and Penalties. By the Rev. H. R. HAWKES. With Fifty Illustrations by M. E. HAWKES.

## At the Back of the North Wind.

By GEORGE MACDONALD, LL.D. With Illustrations by ARTHUR HUGHES.

## Ranald Bannerman's Boyhood.

By GEORGE MACDONALD, LL.D. With Illustrations by ARTHUR HUGHES.

## Stories of Venice and the Venetians.

By JOHN B. MARSH. With Illustrations.

## Other Folk's Lives.

By M. B. SMEDLEY. With Frontispiece.

## Linnet's Trial.

By M. B. SMEDLEY. With Frontispiece.

## Jasmine Leigh.

By C. C. FRASER TYTLER, Author of "Mrs. Judith." With Frontispiece.

## A French Country Family.

By Madame DE WITT (*née Guizot*). Translated by the Author of "John Halifax." With Illustrations by B. RIVERS.

## Papers for Thoughtful Girls.

By SARAH TYTLER. With Illustrations by MILLAIS.

## Heroines in Obscurity.

A Second Series of "Papers for Thoughtful Girls." By SARAH TYTLER.

## Citoyenne Jacqueline.

A Woman's Lot in the Great French Revolution. By SARAH TYTLER.

DALDY, ISBISTER, & CO., 56, LUDGATE HILL.

